

INDIAN PEEPSHOW

BY

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CONCERNING THE WRITER

In the spring of 1893 I was seated in the office of the *Civil and Military Gazette* at Lahore. I was, in fact, occupying the very seat that Kipling had once sat upon. I did not know when I was engaged to occupy that seat how great a man had been there before me. The world then had widely begun to honour him. But in the office of the newspaper there had never been any doubt as to his talents. They talked a great deal about him, saying how certain they were that in the future he was likely to become one of the greatest of contemporary English writers.

Although I had never worked with him, I soon caught the enthusiasm of my colleagues, and I think it was due to Kipling more than to anyone else that I ceased from making writing my primary occupation; for, instead of keeping to my desk, I was always away from it, attempting to solve the mysteries of Indian life. I walked about the bazars. Presently I got into the habit of taking the train and wandering as far as possible in a daily trip into the country. I

would, at week ends, visit such places as Attock and Peshawar. Sometimes I would go south down towards Meerut and Umbala. On days when I could not take a train and had the leisure, I read books about India.

One day the editor said to me: 'Unless you stick more to your desk and learn how to sub-edit and write leading articles, you will never come to anything.' He was probably right, for I never stuck to my desk, could never sub-edit and my leading articles were painful and dull. So I never came to anything. I do not know whether it is quite right to blame Kipling for that; in fact I do not blame him, because I am rather pleased than otherwise that I did not stick to sub-editing. But there was one activity connected with journalism that I really did enjoy. I had not been engaged as a reporter, but I was always willing to report, because the work led me into places which it would not have been possible for a man engaged at his desk to visit. In fact, I was so keen on reporting that presently, not only on this paper, but on other papers that I was associated with in Calcutta, I was sent out regularly on missions of the kind that are called 'special' in Fleet Street; and some of them were indeed of a fine, wild, adventurous kind. I went to China for the Boxer Rebellion; I went to Lhasa with Younghusband, and I was present as a correspondent on several

Frontier expeditions. My office did not try to hold me when the Great War began, and welcomed me back when the war was over. But even that tumultuous experience could not stay me for long. When the Amir made his amazing attempt to invade India in 1921 I was there to report progress. Very little was the progress he made. But war, after all, even when it fascinates you, is hardly the whole life of a man. Most of my years were spent like the years of most men in peace; but as indicated, it was a peace mixed with unceasing travel, even if the travel were only a few miles outside a city.

Sometimes instead of wandering about in bazars, I would collect a few coolies and wander into the jungle after game, big and small. In those early days there was no Arms Act, so far as Europeans were concerned, and few people were interested in what a solitary camper was doing. Or rather few officials were interested, for naturally, the peasantry paid keen attention to the solitary sahib who said he was not an official sahib, but who was quite willing to talk to them about their crops and listen to their legends. Occasionally, I got quite a long leave, two and three months at a time, and these I always spent in the jungle somewhere, again without having to ask leave from this or that person before I could pitch a camp or fire a shot at a sambar. Most of the shooting was done in the hills, and I think the most

lovely periods of my life were spent in the Himalayan forests. I was never able to do much shooting at the higher altitudes, for the question of expense bulked large and I had to make the most of whatever money I had. It was all very well to go out with a single-fly tent, into jungles in India proper, and to have no more than a following of two or three men. But when you get into real cold, you must be well provided for, with plenty of provisions and adequate tents and equipment.

On the plains of India the followers sleep in the open. In the high hills they must have shelter provided, and they are no longer able to pick up a living anyhow, buying their stuff from villagers here and there. I remember one expedition I attempted to make over the Niti pass. We were out of food for two days, and my servants blamed me for want of foresight, though I think (and I said) that it was due to want of foresight on their part. On another occasion, I was out with two Frenchmen who had conceived an idea of finding a way into forbidden parts of Tibet. They knew nothing about organising an expedition of that kind, and we had the greatest trouble both for want of shelter and want of food. All our coolies deserted, and I do not know how it was that any of us got back. But that makes a great story by itself, and I do not intend to enlarge on it in this book; this book is to

be about India only and not about regions outside of it.

To return to the excursions I used to make far from the chair on which I should have been sitting to enter the bazars and wild places. After a time, I became conscious of a new kind of India, an India that lived and throbbed quite outside the experience of the European residents. This was an India not quite of the kind that Edwin Arnold wrote about, the India which bowed its head in patient deep disdain and heard the legions thunder past. The India I mean lived an active and vigorous life of its own, very deeply aware of the life that throbbed through the whole continent. When a pundit says that the rivers of India are an actual part of the life of India, he means something that is rather difficult for the average European to understand; but I have always felt that there is a very subtle connection between the physical feature of the country and the people in it. The pundits say that if the Ganges were interrupted in its flow anywhere, all life in Hindustan would cease. There are similar legends or sayings about the Himalayas; one declares that should Kanchenjanga ever be ripped open by an earthquake or a gigantic landslide, there would issue from it such streams of poison as would kill everybody in the land.

You must know that in India, as in some other

parts of the world, there is a legend of a great snake that lives underground. The cavern is located in different parts of India, but the story is always the same. Man is warned not to dig too deeply, lest he digs into the cavern and that monster emerge. The legend has not in other parts of the world interfered with mining activities; but it has in India, and it was not till the British, with their want of imagination, and their practical mind, came along, that any attempt was made to develop the mineral resources of the country. Even to-day, there are minor rajahs and zemindars who refuse to allow any prospecting in the land they own.

The attitude engendered by this feeling of oneness with the land and its rivers explains the reluctance of very many Indians to develop any property they have. They dislike canals and railways for this reason. Engineers, they say, are always cutting up the Mother. Once I heard an Indian objecting very strongly to a party of sepoy who were range-finding across a valley. 'This is our Mother,' he said, 'and you are measuring distances upon her.' The sepoy, instead of telling him to be off, looked very abashed - but they did not cease from range-finding.

Once you appreciate the feeling that Indians have for the mother-land, which to them, is the very earth

itself, you will understand in some sort the nature of the current that flows through their lives. They are a deeply religious people; but you must not make the mistake of thinking that their religion is concerned with image worship. That is the sort of thing they leave to the children and the uneducated women. I remember once saying to a Marwari: 'Why have you made a hundred thousand gods and goddesses?' He replied: 'Why have you made one?' and, being ashamed, I remained silent. The fact is, that the outward forms of worship – I am talking of course of Hindus only – mean very little to the mass of the people. Many of the ceremonies are merely occasions for a holiday; and other ceremonies have come down from remote times and are kept alive as a matter of form and because they add a diversity to life. It is because form means so little to Indians that there is so much difficulty in converting them to Christianity. It is true that in some parts whole tribes have changed their religion, but the bulk of these tribes do not belong to the caste system of Hinduism.

As for the Mussalmans, I think it should be made clear that they are conscious not so much of their Mother country, as of the great brotherhood of Islam. They have a saying: 'Sab Islam hai bhai,' which means that all Islam is a brotherhood; and you will certainly find that those in India who

profess this great and virile religion accept as brothers any Mussalmans whatever their race or country of origin. Islam cuts across barriers of race, and those provided by geographical differences; you will find Mussalmans of very different status and from different countries embrace each other fraternally on all kinds of occasions. I have never seen people professing other religions of love and brotherhood behave in this way: a man in dress clothes does not elsewhere embrace a man in rags. Amongst Mussalmans the thing would excite no comment at all.

Here, then, are the two great communities of India, each living a tremendous sub-conscious life of its own, and, at bottom, very different from that of the English in the country. It is true the Hindus have a feeling that Mother Earth has been cut up and disfigured by British engineers and British activities generally; but the soreness so created does not go very deep. Mother Earth, after all, is so mighty, so all-powerful, that anything that might be done to her by picks and shovels, and even by dynamite, can only be a small thing.

When I had realised the facts which I have mentioned above, my interest in and understanding of things in India grew deeper. I was more fascinated than ever, and I was still less inclined to sit at my desk. It happened that finally an understanding

editor of a newspaper gave me the liberty to leave the office whenever I liked, provided I had finished a certain column that was allotted to me daily. This enabled me to get away after lunch and not return, but I did not spend the leisure so gained at golf or tennis. I wandered into the city on foot even at the height of the hot weather and observed things in the streets and talked to people in the bazar. The small shopkeepers only do business during certain rush hours; at other times they sit idle and are only too pleased to exchange remarks with the strangers. Many, after they had become aware that I knew something about their modes of life, and emotions, and activities, were very pleased indeed to tell me more, and to relate anecdotes. Most of these were old stories culled from old books. Some I was able to cap with others; and when this happened a shopkeeper would often laugh so much that he almost fell over backwards. These people were always very pressing in their invitations to me to come again. Sometimes they had parties at which thirty or forty people were present, all telling anecdotes, all quizzing each other. By the way, this quizzing habit is very common in India, and those who are good at it are great favourites. For instance, some aged man will enter the room clad in most splendid garments. Immediately there is a shout, 'Here is the bridegroom.' Then they say,

'Where is the bride?' Then they would say, 'The bride has not come because her mother says the groom is too young.' And then there were redoubled screams of laughter.

Life in India flows on very richly, and is, in many ways, more stately and dignified than life in other parts of the world. I know people say, often because they have heard someone else say it before, that life in India is difficult and hard, because the people have no money and have to toil severely all day long. But it is wrong to think of India as composed of multitudes of dull, toiling masses who have no interest in life and are merely exploited by capitalists. I do not think the people of India are exploited at all: they live their own lives, and those lives are not more toilsome than the lives of people in any other country given over to agriculture. There are seasons when a certain number of farmers and their paid helpers have to labour very hard, particularly in rice-growing land. For there can be no harder task in the whole world than that of transplanting rice: it is only in India and other Eastern lands that people would have the patience to do it. Indians are patient under all kinds of misfortunes and calamities, and when it comes to transplanting rice they are also patient. But not dumb. Would you hear in any shopping centre in England the multitudes of voices that you hear

in the bazar? Indians are great talkers, and if, sometimes, you see a group of men sitting round the fire, all silent and glum, the fact is not that they are really glum, but that they have talked so much already that morning; there is nothing more to say till something new happens. I have sat round camp fires with shikaris and followers and, even though an early start was necessary next morning, it was hard to induce them to cease conversing. And when a camp is pitched near a village, or one resides not far from the poorer quarters in a town, one hears a continual hum of conversation all day long. More than that, one hears laughter, and if laughter is not an expression of satisfaction, I do not know what is. Some writers speak of the acrid laughter of the East, but it is not acrid to my ears. Of course the East laughs, like other parts of the world, at the misfortunes of neighbours. But such misfortunes do not occur all the time, whereas in the East there is frequent laughter. Sometimes during a royal and viceregal procession the multitudes lining the route are very silent, but this I put down to the fact that where very great persons are concerned the East has an idea that it is lucky to gaze upon the royal presence and say not a word. Recently, the habit of cheering is becoming, if not common, at least not unusual, and I have no doubt that when the King and Queen come to announce their assumption of the title of

Emperor and Empress of India, great shouts of welcome will be heard.

But I am wandering from my desk again. There came a day when contents of that daily column I had to produce for a newspaper was more or less left to my discretion, I could say what I liked and no one interfered with it; so presently I began to say things about what I had seen or heard during my shuttle-like life in careering up and down India. The things I wrote had no relation to the news, nor were they comments on public affairs. They related little out-of-the-way incidents and mentioned old and forgotten things. Presently, I became aware of a new and powerful source of information that I had tapped. People of every kind and caste in India, ranging from governors to students in secondary schools, began to write to me on topics I had mentioned.

The stream in the end became so large that my little rivulet of information presently became merged in it. That column which I was supposed to produce presently began to write itself, that is to say, it was no longer necessary for me to look for topics. For the last four or five years, it is only now and then that I have been able to write on a subject of which I myself have thought. It would seem that there is a public in India which has interests quite outside the usual newspaper topics, and

the trouble now is not to direct the thoughts of readers into channels out of the ordinary, but to see that the readers do not overwhelm me with their ideas and expressions of opinion on the very lines that I would have followed myself. It is no longer necessary for me to enlarge in my column on the richness and variety of the Indian scene. My correspondents produce the riches themselves and the most I do sometimes is to rub the colours into a glow. I have said all this because it is necessary for me to express my thanks to the *Statesman* for permitting me to use here various incidents and stories that have appeared in its columns over my signature, and to acknowledge the assistance I have received from literally hundreds of people in compiling that daily column of which I have spoken and from which I intend to draw largely for the purpose of this book. Some of those who have contributed are, as I have said, men in high places; many are officials; many are planters; many are soldiers. There are a few sailors and a large number of Indians from every part of India. The last have helped me most in arriving at that general conclusion about Indian life of which I have already spoken.

An aged Bengali, who would in previous years have certainly been styled a 'muni' (or saint), owing to his long beard and general expression of peace

and sagacity, told me once that average men, including all foreigners (amongst whom he included the English) were individualists. That is why they were never likely to reach great heights in the regions of philosophy. Hindus, he said, were certainly conscious of all other Hindus, and arranged their lives as part of a social organism and not as individuals. Still, they were no more than second-rate individuals. The first-rate man should be conscious, he said, of all humanity, that is to say, of everybody in the world, and arrange his life accordingly. Beyond the first-class person was the master mind, a mind which would be conscious not only of all humanity but of all things past and present and future: the world this mind would see would be the whole world and every possible kind of activity of man and beast and insect in it. In fact, the master mind absorbed everything and knew everything, and more than that it could be aware of everything in a single flash. Of course this last idea is not new to people who know anything of the Hindu religion, but I think something else the sage said is not known to most persons. He said that this single illuminating flash, in which everything that had ever happened or existed was revealed to the mind, could be described in a single word of one syllable. That tremendous word is 'OM.' The word itself is probably known to very many Europeans as part

of the Tibetan invocation, 'Om mani padmi om.' Literally translated it means: 'Oh, the lily in the lotus, Oh.' It may not be quite correct to translate the terrific 'Om' with 'Oh,' but I can think of nothing else. There is certainly no means in the English language of summing up in a single syllable all the activities of the universe.

THE DURBARS

Looking back at a lifetime, most of it spent in India, one of the most brilliantly coloured memories is the vision of that great durbar which Lord Curzon held at Delhi to celebrate the assumption of the title of Emperor of India by the late King Edward. The King himself was unable to come out to India, and it was thought at first that this fact would in a large measure destroy the grandeur and attractiveness of the spectacle that Lord Curzon contemplated. As a matter of fact, it did not, because the durbar was on a scale of magnificence which I suppose had never before been witnessed in the world. One need not go into figures to prove this. Everybody who was there admitted that they had never seen, or even contemplated, anything approaching what was placed before their eyes. Real genius did its work. It was a genius which in an amazing fashion brought East and West together. There was barbaric magnificence combined with English restraint; that was the way that Lord Curzon got his effect. One day there would be a review of

troops who marched past in formations that had been employed in Europe for centuries. On the next day there would be a review of retainers representing the retinues of the Indian princes; then there would be a great ball at which people danced to the strains of regimental bands. The next day there would be something purely Indian, and so on.

The durbar opened with an elephant procession. To some that term may just mean a certain number of elephants led down a road. But the procession was much more than that. In Curzon's procession were the ruling princes of India in all their finery. You never see a painted elephant in England; that art of putting colours in gorgeous designs on the hides of elephants is unknown in Europe. I am told that the elephants themselves are very pleased with this ornamenting, and strongly resent the paint being scrubbed off when the ceremony is over. After the decoration, on the back of the elephants are placed great embroidered shawls, not the ordinary cloths of commerce, but shawls taken from the treasure houses of kings. The howdah which carries the riders on the elephant is made of the richest woods, burnished with nails of gold and carrying canopies of the finest silk. Within the howdah, as in a coach, is seated the ruler. On each side of the elephants march men in gorgeous clothing, carrying maces, and spears, old pikes, and

other instruments which are meant to symbolise the rank and dignity of the rider. You are to suppose these elephants following one another, not in ones or twos but in an unending train. I forget how many elephants were brought together for the Delhi Durbar, but it seemed to me that the procession would never end. The Duke of Connaught headed the line on a state elephant. The end of it, I think, was brought up by a Shan chief and his sister, who according to Shan custom was also his wife. This pair excited the greatest curiosity and wonder among the multitudes that lined the route. I think they were the only rulers in the procession who showed no interest of any kind in their surroundings: they looked to the front, impassive and unmoved.

Middle-class Indians often speak of that elephant procession as if it were one of the major events of the century. Long before the durbar was actually held they were talking in India about the great gathering of elephants that were to take part in it. The numbers were magnified naturally, and in due course it was reported that the magnificent Viceroy was determined to assemble at Delhi more elephants than had ever been seen together in the history of the world. There were some who admired the idea, but presently a whisper began to grow that it was presumptuous on the part of the Viceroy to attempt

to outrival the elephant assemblies that had been seen in Vedic days. The next thing was a report, invented by some malicious person and carefully fostered in the bazars, that there would be a great disaster during the durbar. This mischievous rumour was repeated from mouth to mouth; that the elephant procession would be followed by a terrible calamity. If the elephants were panic-stricken or stampeded for one reason or another, multitudes of spectators would be slain. Some princes believed this story, and one or two at the last moment fell ill or made some other excuse for not attending. It was widely said, too, that there were not so many people to view that procession as there might have been.

Some days before the actual procession and the opening of the durbar I went to view the elephant camp. There were many more animals there than I had expected. For, while one or two rulers may have been impressed by the bazar report, the majority of them had brought to Delhi not only the elephants they intended to ride in the procession, but all the elephants in their possession. It was a strange and awesome business walking about amongst those masses of beasts. One elephant is impressive, but think of them in hundreds. But any idea I might have had about the risk of a tremendous stampede or panic was soon removed.

I spoke to many mahouts and they were all agreed that they did not believe a panic was likely. 'Look at the beasts,' they said: 'how happy and contented they are,' and, indeed, it seemed to me that all the elephants were in a distinctly happy mood. It is always possible to notice the twinkle in the eye of elephants when they are contented and pleased, and at the elephant camp there were twinkling eyes everywhere. Evidently the great animals were very satisfied at being in a crowd, and when I left the camp I was convinced that there was nothing in the theory of a possible panic.

But the pessimists were not so convinced. A shopkeeper said to me that the durbar was really an 'elephant durbar,' and, 'who knows,' he added, 'what elephants will do?' This idea of an elephant durbar was very widespread. My own servant had it, and also men employed in building the great camp which had been erected for the purposes of the durbar, and I was told even the peasantry round the city were convinced that the elephants were to dominate all the proceedings.

Two or three days before the actual procession a thing happened which raised some doubts in my mind. There was a rehearsal of the procession and the elephants of all the rulers who were to take part in it were drawn up in a long line in order of precedence outside the railway station. I and one or

two other people from the Press camp were on the opposite side of the road, watching the long line of elephants. Very impressive they looked with their howdahs and most of their trappings. They had not yet been painted, so that bit of colour was missing. As we stood watching, one of my companions drew my attention to an enormous elephant somewhere down the middle of the line. He had his trunk straight out and was swaying gently to and fro. That is the kind of habit many elephants have; I suppose it is a form of exercise. Anyway, this swaying elephant, perhaps because his trunk was straight out, began to excite attention. Presently the elephant on either side of him began to sway also, and in no space of time the whole line of elephants was swaying to and fro. 'I don't like this very much,' one of my companions said, and indeed the sight was alarming. What was going to happen next? You know how quickly any feeling of apprehension or alarm spreads in a crowd. The crowd itself began to move and one felt that even if the elephants did not panic, the crowd of men would; that would mean a great rush which would alarm the elephants. But the crowd hardly knew in which direction to run, because the only place of safety was the railway station and the buildings all round it, and the elephants were in between them and the crowd.

But before the crowd could come to any decision a startling event occurred. It may not appear to have been very startling when read of now in the quiet of some room, but it was startling to us out there in the presence of these huge creatures. The elephant which had started the swaying business began to trumpet. That sound in the kind of silence which common apprehension had already created was like the sound of a charge blown on a bugle.

Then the situation was changed in a moment. The British officer in charge of the procession was present, riding on a small white horse. He galloped this horse up to the trumpeting elephant, and one could see him raise his hand and wave to the mahout to take the animal out of the line and down the road. The man was quick to obey, and he had the elephant out and going down the road almost before one could realise what was happening. Immediately it had got clear of the line, the other elephants stopped swaying. I remember enquiring the name of that officer who had certainly prevented a real disaster and found that it was Buller, a Civil Servant.

Years afterwards I met Buller in charge of a district in Eastern Bengal. I happened to tell this story at a small party given to other Europeans in the station, and one of them told me that, though

Buller had often talked about the 'elephant durbar, he had never mentioned this incident to any of them. The papers did not make much of it at the time, because no one wanted to emphasise a story which, if it got abroad, might entirely ruin the real procession. I paid another visit to the elephant camp with some other people I had enticed a day or two after the procession was over, and there were the elephants looking as happy as possible. All the mahouts agreed that the creatures had enjoyed themselves thoroughly. The only trouble they said would be when it came to separating the gigantic herds into units when the durbar was over.

I learnt a good deal about elephants, talking to the mahouts. It appears that you cannot name an elephant just as you like: it is the prerogative of the mahout to do that. I asked for a few specimen names and I cannot say that they were particularly striking or original. Elephants were called sometimes Rustum and Lightning and Thunder and similar high-sounding titles, but it seemed to me that nearly every other elephant was a Pearl. Which brings me to the extraordinary legend that certain elephants grow pearls within their skulls. Every now and then you will see advertised in the Indian papers an elephant pearl for a lakh or two lakhs of rupees. This pearl is really no more than an unusual growth of bone, the result of some kind of

disease. It is not a pearl in any sense of the word, but the possession of it is considered lucky, and that is why such high prices are paid for it. I had always believed that the pearl was only found in the skulls of aged elephants that had been a long time in captivity, but I am assured by a forest officer who has such a pearl that it was found in the skull of a young rogue elephant that he had shot. But I could talk about elephants for hours, whereas my intention is to write about the durbar.

The elephant procession was the opening ceremony of the durbar. When it was safely over and nothing had happened, the masses of people in Delhi recovered their self-possession, and everything went just as Lord Curzon desired it. I think there was only one hitch, and that was on the occasion of the great ball to which all the fashion of India had been invited, and which was attended by all the rulers in glittering garments and jewels. All went merrily at the function itself, it was after the ball was over that the hitch occurred. You must know that the people attending the durbar were spread over a very large area; camps were miles apart. The soldiery (and what would any durbar be without a military display?) were in camps seven or eight miles away from the centre, and so officers and their wives had been brought in by train. They were to be taken back to camp by a

train leaving at 3 a.m.; but neither at 3 a.m. nor for some hours later was there any train. Delhi can be very cold in the winter, and officers and their wives had not sufficient wraps to be comfortable in the railway station. I was not in the crowd that waited at the station, but I have heard the most amazing stories of how officers and their wives and daughters, generals and young things just out of school, huddled together for warmth during that cold morning.

It happened that Lord Curzon, for reasons into which we need not go, was not a great favourite with the soldiery at the time, and this mismanagement put the lid on a dislike that had been simmering for some time. One can talk about it now, without feeling that a reference to the incident would be unwise, but in those days a bare mention of the great Delhi ball would excite some remarkable comments from the mouths of soldiers. There had been big manœuvres in the vicinity of Delhi before the durbar, and the troops had worked their way, fighting, towards the Panipat Plain on which they were camping. They were given two days, I think, to refresh and clean themselves before the durbar, and then they were called upon to take their part in the ceremonial displays that had been arranged. The rank and file, by the way, had not busied themselves at all with any kind of grievance against the

Viceroy: it was their job to manœuvre and form a picturesque background whenever necessary, and they were not asked to the ball. When the durbar itself opened, Lord Curzon made a stage entry into the amphitheatre. There was great cheering from every part of the amphitheatre except that reserved for military officers and their wives. There, and there only, was a dead silence. Later on, when the Duke of Connaught made his impressive entrance, the military section went mad. The demonstration was of a most extraordinary kind, aged and retired generals standing up in their seats and waving their handkerchiefs. I think before Lord Curzon had ceased from being Viceroy the impression about him among officers had altered considerably. Those who had thought that Lord Curzon was instrumental in overworking them during the durbar were shortly after faced by a man like Lord Kitchener, who did not believe in soldiers getting any rest at all. One of his schemes for tightening up discipline came to be known as the 'Kitchener Test': Every regiment had to undergo that test every year, and it was a process which tried the men and officers very hard. Marks were given and the regiments low down in the list had extra duties allotted to them. After Lord Kitchener went the test was abolished and the army had peace again.

The march past and review of troops was naturally

a very impressive function, but it was thrown entirely into the shade, from the point of view of those who looked for sensation at the durbar, by at least two of the ceremonies which had been arranged to display the Oriental aspect of India. One was called 'The Review of Retainers.' The Retainers were the irregular troops maintained by ruling princes and chiefs. These irregulars were in Oriental uniforms and their arms belonged to a century that was gone. Many princes showed men clad in armour. There were bodies of spearmen, bowmen, men who carried maces, pikemen and halberdiers. One prince displayed a body of people armed only with what are known in India as scorpions, a terrible instrument with claws. Elephants appeared again, this time elephants in armour, with great shields over their foreheads, and with a stout steel pike sticking out of the middle of the shield, for in old days in India elephants were often employed to break down the gates of forts. To prevent this, gates used to be studded with iron nails, with the points outwards; and in order to overcome this form of defence, the attackers put these shields on the heads and foreheads of the elephants.

Then the most remarkable thing of all. At the Review of Retainers were men with a sword in each hand, mounted on stilts, whose purpose was to fight elephants. But even more dangerous was the

profession of the fighting mahout. He had to sit on the neck of the elephant that was engaged in battle with another. The risk he ran was twofold. The opposite elephant might seize him with its trunk, sweep him off his seat, and trample upon him. Or his own elephant might do the same thing. There is a famous Indian picture of two war elephants engaged in battle. They have met head on, and one of them has been actually raised in the air by the shock. The two mahouts are both shown as having lost their grip, and on the verge of falling off.

The American visitors to the durbar were very pleased with the little silver cannon shown by Baroda and the lovely bullocks that drew them. Some pack bullocks were also shown in a transport train, belonging to a breed that I did not know, they had long sweeping horns and sloping foreheads. They carried themselves with an air of distinction that it is impossible to describe. One almost thought them to be arrogant human beings. 'That is exactly what they are,' said one of the drivers when I was questioning him about his charges. 'These bullocks are Brahmans who have committed a sin. In due course they will become humans again, provided that they do not sin a second time, in which case they will become horses.'

In addition to the motley throngs of retainers in the great amphitheatre there was a march past of

the better-trained troops belonging to the princes, and of various other groups or companies of people reflecting the various activities of India. The State troops were in modern uniforms, but not all the equipment was modern, and as far as can be judged from a march past their training varied a great deal. Some companies went past very stoutly but irregularly, others, particularly those belonging to the Punjab princes, went past like highly trained soldiers. Kashmir, too, showed a great company of very fine soldiers. On the flank of one company there came something like a monster built for a carnival at Nice. What is it? Everybody present stood up in his seat to gape; I thought at first that it was a man on stilts, but later on the shape resolved itself into a real man – the Kashmir Giant. They had been talking about this enormous creature, but most people did not believe in him, and no one thought for a moment that he would be marching on the flank of a company of soldiers. He not only marched, but was carrying over his shoulder a musket as big as a cannon. I forget how large the arena of the amphitheatre was, very large, and the giant was obviously tired before the troops had made the circuit. I suppose there is a record somewhere of the man's height, but all I can say is that he was unbelievably tall. Current report declared that he could not fit by any means into a railway

carriage, much less into any other kind of conveyance. It said further that he had to walk all the way from Srinagar to Delhi, and to walk back again. I had a private interview with him later on, but his dignity did not match his stature, for he put out a hand that looked as large as a tray and uttered that all-pervasive word 'bakshish.' I put a rupee into that hand, and it looked no larger than a threepenny-bit.

But the greatest sensation in that review was provided by the Mutiny Veterans. Lord Curzon had put the whole machinery of the State to work to discover every survivor of the Mutiny still alive in India, at least every survivor who had fought on the English side. The bulk of these survivors, of course, were Punjabis, but there were many old soldiers belonging to other races, and a handful of Europeans. The Punjabis with their long beards and old uniforms were very striking. Many were bent with age, and had to carry sticks to support them on the long march round the arena. Most of the Europeans were not in uniform; they had shed their uniforms many years ago. I remember two lines Kipling wrote when he read the descriptions of that march past of the Mutiny Veterans:

The remnant of that desperate host
That cleansed the East with steel.

India as a man still living can know it is famous for two durbars; the second one was to announce the assumption by King George V of the title of Emperor of India. The sovereign was present in person, and that fact added greatly to the dignity of the event, for he was the first sovereign to set foot in India while on the throne of England. For some reason, it was decided not to follow any of the precedents set by Lord Curzon. There was to be hardly any mixture of East and West, and the ceremony was almost wholly of a Western character; in fact, but for the presence of Eastern costumes and Eastern peoples and for a big mela (or fair) on the river bed, the durbar might have been held anywhere. In that sense it was a far inferior spectacle to the barbaric splendour of the scene which Lord Curzon had designed and was able to display. At the same time the durbar was associated with a fact of such far-reaching political significance that Curzon's durbar was almost put in the shade.

Some years afterwards when I mentioned this fact of political significance in a London club, some had not heard of it; others had forgotten it. There was a hazy idea that some great political concession had been made to the people of India, but that was all, so that it may be of interest to relate exactly what happened. The durbar was practically over. It had been announced to all the world that King

George V of England was now also Emperor of India. The trumpets and fanfares had all been blown, and people had risen in their seats, because the King was about to descend from the throne. But instead of leaving, His Majesty moved to a second throne in another part of the amphitheatre and it became evident that he was about to make a second announcement. The whole of that tremendous gathering remained hushed and silent. The 'boons' that were to be granted to India had already been announced: these were not great or many, but were of a comforting kind. What was to come now? In the old days of despotic rule a new sovereign sometimes, instead of announcing 'boons,' uttered threats like the Israelite who said that he intended to rule with whips of scorpions. Of course nothing of that kind was expected from the new Emperor of India; still, men waited with bated breath for what was to be announced.

The matter that was to be announced had been kept entirely secret. The members of the Executive Council, the Secretary of State for India and, of course, the King himself, knew what had been settled. Only one non-official had been taken into the confidence of this august party. He was an Indian journalist, a man who was so adept at finding out things that were meant to be known only to a few that it was decided to let him into this secret

also, and to put him on his honour not to divulge it. Was any journalist so greatly tempted? But the secret was not told, and when His Majesty announced what was about to happen, people gasped with amazement at the nature of the concession that the Government of India was now making. Strange to say, Lord Curzon was concerned in this affair also.

Some years before, probably even before the elephant durbar, Lord Curzon, as Viceroy, was perusing some papers dealing with Bengal. One paper particularly caught his eye; it had probably got mixed up with the others by accident. Anyway it was a proposal, circulated by the Government of Bengal among various high people in that province and noted on by the Secretary of State, that Bengal should be divided in two. The proposal originated possibly from a Lieutenant-Governor himself, and was concerned with the fact that the province had become too big for one man to manage. Some of those consulted were for a partition of the province, and others not. What angered and amazed Lord Curzon was the fact that such a proposal should have been made without his knowledge, and that activities connected with putting it into shape were being carried on secretly and behind his back. The Viceroy, I doubt not, expressed his anger in some way or another, but

presently he became absorbed in the papers connected with the suggestion, and finally he became an enthusiastic supporter of the idea that the business of administering the province of Bengal could be carried on more easily if the province were cut in two. Lord Curzon was not a man who worked in secret; what he proposed to do he uttered to the world, and naturally his scheme for creating a second province became known to all Bengal. Immediately there was an outcry. At first numbers of people thought that the outcry was artificial and had no real feeling behind it, but those who have followed what I have said about the Indian idea of the Mother, will understand me when I say that Bengali opinion was really outraged. I do not say that all the highly educated Bengalis who took part in the agitation had any superstition about Mother Earth, but to the bulk of Bengalis this partition of Bengal appeared as a kind of sacrilege in which the Mother herself was being cut in two. Europeans will find it rather hard to understand this attitude, but it was certainly there. Lord Curzon's proposal was to cut off Eastern Bengal from Bengal proper; to add to Eastern Bengal the province of Assam; and thus have a province of Bengal and a province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. I do not know whether the people of Eastern Bengal were more shocked than the people of Western Bengal, but I

made a tour into Eastern Bengal at a time when the agitation against the proposal was at its height, and the depth of feeling which was displayed by the Hindu Bengalis was amazing. On the other hand the Mussalmans in Eastern Bengal were pleased at the thought of having to themselves a province in which they would predominate, for there are more Mussalmans than Hindus in Eastern Bengal. But the bulk of the Mussalmans are poorly educated and are poor in other ways. Although the agitation lasted for many months and was carried on in the most decided way, Lord Curzon, his mind once made up, was not to be deterred. The new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was duly created, a Lieutenant-Governor was appointed, Dacca was made the capital of the new province, and all the necessary administrative machinery devised. Even after the creation of the new province the agitation continued, but at the time when Lord Curzon left the country Bengalis had become accustomed to the idea of the partition.

At the second durbar King George said that, 'acting on the advice of his Ministers,' he now announced that the partition of Bengal had been rescinded and that Bengal was to be her old self again. When this unexpected announcement was made, no sound of any kind came from the vast audience that heard it. But there was more to

come. After allowing his words to sink into the minds of his hearers His Majesty proceeded to say that Calcutta was no longer to be the capital of the Indian Empire. It had been decided to remove the capital to Delhi.

Into the minds of many of those who heard these words there must have come memories of what they had read about other emperors who had moved a capital from one place to another. When that was done in the old days it was not merely a question of moving the heads of the administration, and various ministerial officers. Everybody in the capital had to go. One great city is still standing in India, a great and imperial city without a single inhabitant. Everybody had to go; and, although there is now no law forbidding anybody to live in Fatehpur Sikri, there is nobody there. The city is peopled only by ghosts. There must have been, in the minds of many, grave doubts and hesitation as to what would happen to the great city on the banks of the Hughli. I was not present at that durbar and so I cannot say whether the hush that succeeded the King's second speech lasted for very long. Anyway, it lasted till the King had left the throne and the amphitheatre. Then a perfect babel of sound broke forth, and we must imagine a similar babel of sound following the messages that flashed from the telegraph offices to every part of India. In

Bengal, of course, the excitement was immense. On the whole the rejoicing that followed the news that there was to be no more partition of Mother Bengal was not overshadowed by the other thought that the capital of India was to be removed from Bengal to the Punjab.

Other parts of India might or might not have been indifferent to the partition or otherwise of Bengal, but the removal of the capital to Delhi was to them an astonishing and remarkable decision. I do not know whether at first anybody liked it; the thing savoured too much of the old despotisms in which gigantic decisions were taken without consulting anybody. What might not come next? So there was no genuine chorus of approval of the measures that had been announced. Later on when people became accustomed to the idea there was less opposition to it. It seemed after all that Calcutta would not really suffer in any way, so far as her commerce and industries were concerned. The Government might go, but the jute mills could not be moved; coal would still come to the banks of the Hughli because it was from there that this product could be transported most cheaply to other parts of the world and to the jute mills. There would be no point in attempting to take tea to Delhi; Calcutta would continue to ship tea. In fact, presently Bengal was content to lose her place

as the premier province of India. Calcutta was busy making money. In a few months, interest began to be taken all over India in the plans for the building of the new capital, and even before the war it was rarely that anybody living in Calcutta heard a word against the move to Delhi. Thus, while the removal of the capital from Calcutta was finally considered a matter of no great importance, the decision to make Bengal one province again was long declared to be a sign of the strong common sense and sincerity of the British people. My own idea is that the Government first decided to remove the capital to Delhi and then they determined, as a kind of sop to Bengal, to rescind the partition.

One does not want to be too serious in writing a book of this kind, and that is why I mention what happened after the King had as his final action in Delhi laid the foundation-stone of the New Delhi that was about to be built. Engineers went over the ground, looked at the foundation-stone, and said it was no kind of foundation-stone at all; where had it come from? Nobody knew; and the whisper went abroad that it had been brought in a hurry from the nearest cemetery. I do not know whether that story is true or not, but it is a fact that after condemning the foundation-stone the engineers condemned the site, and in no mild terms. It became obvious that the site selected

could not be used. Another site had to be found, and it is on the second site that the New Delhi of to-day stands. It is a fine and glorious city. I imagine no city in the world has such a stately setting. Some of the palaces in it are designed on a scale almost too vast for ordinary human beings. The building of New Delhi almost came to a stop during the war, when the money was required for other purposes. But when the war was over, the Assembly, which had been very cautious in voting supplies for other purposes, readily agreed to vote the money to carry on the building as rapidly as possible. The imagination of the members had been caught by the size and form of such buildings as were already taking shape. Everybody wanted to see what the new city would look like when completed.

While there have been only two big durbars in India, there was a series of spectacles presented to the Prince of Wales, now the Duke of Windsor, in various parts of India which rivalled in magnificence and grandeur anything that had been shown at the durbar. And yet I remember best a scene which took place when the Prince appeared at a function on the Calcutta Maidan, and was surrounded by an enormous mob. Those were days of trouble and racial strife. It had been said that it was a most dangerous thing to allow the Prince to

visit India at all: there had been riots at Bombay when he landed, and the feeling in Calcutta was even higher than it was in Western India. So when the Prince and his escort were lost in the midst of the multitude many feared some disastrous event. But the multitude were not animated by any racial feeling. They simply wanted to see the Prince and take 'darshan' of him. This word 'darshan' means 'sight,' and that kind of sight which is followed by good luck. In India they take darshan of their own princes, and the greater the prince the greater the good luck.

Mention of the Prince reminds me of a little incident that took place on the Maidan when his father, as Prince of Wales, and the Princess of Wales landed at the river's edge on their visit to Calcutta during their tour of India. It had been announced that their Highnesses did not favour the idea of receiving presents from ruling princes, but the city of Calcutta was permitted to give a present to the Princess of Wales. This present consisted of a rope of pearls. Every ruler in India insisted on presenting one of the pearls. The city of Calcutta bought a few more, with the result that the rope, when complete, probably was the finest rope of pearls in existence. There was a little ceremony, when the present in a highly-decorated case was handed over to the Princess of Wales. The Princess opened the

case expecting, perhaps, to find something lavish; but who could have expected such a magnificent sight? With a little cry of delight she slipped the rope of pearls over her head and allowed it to rest on her shoulders. Nor did she afterwards take it off; an attendant behind her took the case, but the Princess wore the necklace all through the ceremony and during the drive to Government House. Sometimes one reads in the papers of the Queen appearing at this or that function 'wearing a magnificent rope of pearls.' That is the rope presented to her by the city of Calcutta.

Thinking of the forthcoming Coronation Durbar, I am led to recall a certain vivid and gorgeous suggestion made to me by a Talukdar, a suave and courtly gentleman. He was greatly impressed, it appears, by a feature of the Coronation Durbar of George V and Queen Mary. The King and Queen were seated on thrones placed high above all the other seats in the amphitheatre; not only above the crowd of onlookers, but high above all the high and excellent princes and others who were grouped about their Majesties. You know how at any ceremony the most important personages are seated in the middle of a semi-circle of people arranged according to precedent, those on the wings being almost on the same level as the central figures, and the whole group resembling something that might

be arranged by a stage manager. At the Coronation Durbar twenty-five years ago, the stage manager was an officer of the Indian Civil Service who was unhampered by any stage traditions. He thought the King and Queen should be placed on high, and placed on high they were.

This imaginative Talukdar said that when he saw their Majesties raised on high he felt rushing through him a wave of loyalty and devotion impossible to describe. He was indeed 'taking darshan' of the King and Queen. In India the mere sight of a royal person is supposed to be lucky, and the more exalted he is the luckier it is to see him. We are told that in the old days in India persons of high degree took advantage of this belief to extract from every person who looked at them, when they went abroad, at least one rupee. The Talukdar, in 'taking darshan' of the King and Queen, was, so to speak, basking in the rays of good luck and prosperity which their presence induced. And, being raised on high, their Majesties were seen by everybody in that vast assemblage. They brought good luck to everybody, and probably raised in every heart the same emotions that were felt by the Talukdar.

'At one and the same time,' said he, 'the King and Queen were enthroned both in the amphitheatre and in the hearts of those present. Now,' he continued, 'let me tell you of an idea I have for a

future durbar, which would show in a practical manner the position which the Emperor of India should hold in the minds of Indians.' The Talukdar then explained his splendid idea. It was, that at a given moment during the durbar, the throne or thrones should be raised on high on the very shoulders of a multitude of people representing all the castes and creeds of India. The burden was not to be a mean or a small one, but something really majestic and triumphant, which, if it were to be lifted at all, would need the presence and strength of a thousand men or more. 'Let a castle rise in the air, and even if it trembled slightly it would remind the lookers-on all the more that their Majesties were being carried aloft, not by some mechanical process, but by the arms and in the hearts of living men.'

'British sentiment,' I said, 'would not tolerate such a thing.'

'As to that,' was the reply, 'we are not concerned with British sentiment. Why should not India have her own way of showing her loyalty and devotion? It is no disgrace to carry, or to be carried in, a sedan chair. Why make fuss about a throne? Are you not aware that till a recent date the Emperor of China used to be carried on all his journeys, not in a sedan chair, but in something that was almost as large as a house? Five hundred shoulders willingly bowed beneath that burden. I

now propose a burden for a thousand shoulders, and it will be borne aloft for only five or six minutes at most.'

Then the Talukdar proceeded to elaborate a plan for a throne or thrones placed on a dais similar to that used at the last Coronation Durbar. It would be built upon crossed poles like lattice-work by the sides of which would stand a thousand men at attention like soldiers. At a given signal they would bend down, grasp the poles, and place the whole burden upon their shoulders. Very little practice would enable them to act in unison and without shaking the thrones. The King and Queen would thus be presented to everybody in the amphitheatre at the same time, and in a dramatic fashion. There would be no craning of necks or other undignified movements in the crowd. The darshan would be simultaneous, and the whole crowd would participate in the auspicious moment together, thus making it more auspicious still. Carried away by his idea, my friend added that every man who took part in raising the throne on high should be given the title of Taktadar, or Throne-Bearer. 'I myself,' he said, 'though I am past the age for feats of strength, would willingly volunteer to be a Taktadar, and I have no doubt that, if volunteers were called for, you would get not a thousand but twenty thousand.'

I present the idea, but as I said to the Talukdar, I

am very much afraid that British sentiment would be against it. But whatever form the next Coronation Durbar takes, I hope that the King and Queen will, as on the previous occasion, be enthroned so high that everybody in the amphitheatre will get a clear view of them.

ODD CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS

I was coming down from Conoor, in Southern India, and the car halted by a mountain stream to refresh the radiator. By the side of the stream four or five men were seated, belonging to some caste unknown to me. They were small men, with biggish faces and long legs, and were dressed in green. I asked a passer-by if he could tell me who these people were, and he answered in a casual way, 'Oh, they are Hari Bol.' He was going on his way when I stopped him and made further enquiries. The information had to be dragged out of him bit by bit, because the man seemed to think it very strange that I should not know what a Hari Bol was. It appears that these people make their living seated on the tops of trees chanting the praises of Hari, a Hindu deity. When I enquired how one could make a living in that quaint way, my informant said, 'Oh, they select a tree which overlooks the courtyard of a house.'

'Why should that bring them any money?'

'Because they stay in the tree for hours at a time

seeing what is going on in the courtyard, and the people in the house don't like that. The women are at work in the courtyard, and a place which is supposed to be a private place has become public owing to these rascals sitting in the trees.'

'Why are they not turned off?'

'Because it is a sin to stop any man from chanting the praises of Hari.'

It appears that finally the head of the household lays some money, and some food also, at the base of the tree. If it is not enough, the Hari Bols continue to chant the praises of Hari till enough money and food have been presented. Later, I asked the men themselves if they were Hari Bols and they replied cheerfully that they were.

The pressure put, by various kinds of people in India, upon those who are really religious is very great. There are all these yogis and fakirs about, who blackmail, not only the more ignorant, but sometimes quite educated people, by threatening to commit some religious offence and then put the blame for having done it on the people they are blackmailing. Thus a man will threaten to commit suicide and add, 'When I am dead, the gods will blame you, for you could have saved my life by giving me the money for which I asked.' Sometimes the whole village may be blackmailed in this way, not a villager daring to tell the man to be off,

or telling him to hang himself and be hanged to it.

A very common way of getting money out of people is by the process known as 'sitting dharna', which means just sitting by the gate or doorstep of the man who has to pay. The blackmailer merely sits or lies across the threshold, and he refuses to go away until he is satisfied. This process, however, is only employed for obtaining money that is already due plus some dizzy amount of interest. Afghan money-lenders sit dharna a great deal, very often in groups: two or three men to whom a village is indebted take up a position in some prominent place in the village close to the bazaar house, and make remarks about everybody who is passing. They address endearments to the women going to fetch water, insult the men, and generally make themselves a nuisance. They have a great deal of patience, these Afghan money-lenders; they will perhaps dislocate the life of a village in this way for six or seven days on end; by that time the villagers have got together, discovered who the people are who owe money to the Afghans, and put pressure on them to pay up. By the seventh day the wretched people have got the money somehow, plus the interest, which may total many times the original sum borrowed, the money-lenders are paid and the villagers are left alone. In this case there is not any special resort to play upon the

superstition of the villagers, for the money-lenders of the Mussalmans and the villagers generally Hindus. I know of one case, though, in which superstition was used by an Afghan for extorting money. He went to the house of the debtor and chuckled there continuously for about a quarter of an hour. The debtor finally asked him what he was laughing about. He got the alarming reply: 'When I laugh, God laughs.' The debtor was so terrified at this expression that he paid up all he owed plus the interest.

Here is another case of the same kind of trick. One Afghan money-lender said in a casual way to the debtor: 'God always forgives three murders.' He said it for a second time later on. He had no need to say it three times.

Some superstitions in India concerned with animals are very hard to explain. Why, for instance, are peacocks sacred? I imagine that at one time the feathers of the animal were so valuable that rulers passed a law imposing a severe penalty on those who killed the birds. But curiously enough, though the bird is sacred, the feathers are regarded as unlucky, except for royalty. Give a man the present of a peacock fan and you will make him your enemy for life. Indeed, in some parts of India the bird itself is regarded as unlucky, and although Hindu villagers will not shoot them themselves,

some will ask sportsmen to shoot them; but sportsmen had better find out first how the villagers, as a whole, regard these birds, for some of the most unpleasant shikari incidents have taken place when a sahib has shot a peacock without asking for permission. Generally in the United Provinces it is unsafe to shoot peacocks, though I must say the cock bird is a great temptation, when he goes flying past like an aeroplane.

Apes and monkeys are sacred. The reason given is that they helped the Prince Rama when he set out on his great campaign to recover his wife, who had been captured by the monster Ravan and carried off to Ceylon. But again, as with peacocks, there are occasions when sahibs are asked by villagers to shoot monkeys that are becoming a nuisance. This monkey nuisance is one of the problems of India. Owing to the sanctity attached to these animals they have increased tremendously in numbers and are a greater menace to crops than any other kind of animal. Not only do they destroy crops, but they come into towns and villages, where they rob the shops and enter into houses, where they steal and destroy things. The big grey monkey is alleged to carry off babies, play with them for a bit on tree tops and then, getting tired of the new toy, drop them to earth. In places like Hardwar, which is a very sacred city indeed, the shopkeepers have to

barricade their stalls against monkeys, and there, though you may not kill a monkey, it is legitimate enough to give him a good hiding. So the shop assistants are armed with long sticks, which they use fairly freely, but not too freely because sometimes a monkey, when struck, will turn round and spring at the striker, who must take care not to kill his assailant even in self-defence.

Occasionally, where there is one special rogue of a monkey who is evidently the leader of a gang, steps are taken to capture him. After he is trapped he is put into a bag, the top of which is closed with string, and the monkey is then lowered into a river or a tank three or four times. He is not kept under the water long enough to drown him, but he is given a good fright. When that bag is opened, out flies a monkey who disappears very rapidly and he is never seen again, at least in that locality.

Sometimes an angry villager or a shopkeeper will adopt another plan. After the monkey has been caught, he will be pinioned and his hind-quarters painted some rich colour. He is then released. His own kind will no longer have anything to do with him, and they bite and maul him about a bit before they turn him out of the troop.

I was told of a case – but this was in South Africa – in which a baboon was painted a bright red. The animal was turned out of his troop in due course,

but strangely enough it returned to the farm where it had been painted and became a tame and domesticated animal, following the farmer about, refraining from picking and stealing and only eating what it was given. But the Indian apes and monkeys are not like that; a painted monkey will take to the woods where he will live a solitary life.

We have had peacocks and apes, what about ivories? Although there is an elephant god, Ganesh, the elephant itself, so far as I know, is not sacred, though to own an elephant adds greatly to the prestige of the owner. Recently, however, many princes say boldly that they do not care about the prestige; they would rather have a fleet of motor-cars than any number of elephants. The motor-car, indeed, has been a great blow to the domesticated elephant. Many planting firms and others prefer to use lorries for transport purposes, and the elephant is no longer wanted as much as he was. One result is that men of lesser degree own elephants to-day; they are cheaper. I have heard it said that it no longer pays the Government to support the elaborate establishment that used to exist at one time for the capture of elephants.

As a consequence, herds of wild elephants are growing larger and more numerous, and because it is still illegal to shoot wild elephants, the increase in the number of these animals is sometimes a

menace to villages and plantations in the forest that they inhabit.

Apart from the danger that rogue elephants are to human life, sometimes whole herds will take it into their heads to rush a village or a tea garden, uprooting plants and destroying huts and pull up trees.

I have heard of one garden where all the pipes which carried water were torn up by elephants almost every year. It was finally decided to lay the pipes underground. Yet a few weeks after the work had been completed, the elephants had dug out the pipes and stopped the flow of water. The coolies said that the elephants had heard the noise of water running below them when they were crossing the pipe line, and it was curiosity more than mischief that had made them uproot the pipes.

The pipes were planted again deeper, and again they were torn up, and this time, to show the sagacity of elephants, the pipes had not been left lying where they had been uprooted but carried away a long distance and hidden in the jungle. It reminds me of what an officer in the Indian Army Reserve, who had been sent to our regiment, said when he was asked whether he understood the system of keeping regimental accounts: 'Yes, in Burma we teach our elephants to keep our accounts.'

Fish are sacred to some castes in India, particularly the higher castes. They are considered lucky, and a picture or a model of a fish is often given as a present, particularly in order to show respect and admiration, though I doubt whether, in India, regard for the fish is carried as far as it is in Tibet. There, killing of a fish is a very great offence and might even be followed by a penalty of outlawry. They say that once, when a monk killed and ate a fish, that the Dalai Lama, many hundreds of miles away, became seriously ill; and it is chiefly in order that high officials at Lhasa may keep good health that Mount Everest explorers are warned against catching fish.

But chief amongst the sacred animals of India is the cow. Some suppose that the veneration of the cow is due chiefly to the part the animal plays in the Hindu economic system; butter and milk cannot be defiled if handled by a lower caste man. A Brahman can only eat food which has been cooked by himself or by a member of his family, but he can take milk from any Brahman; more than that, he can take it from a Rajput. A Rajput, though he may only eat food cooked by people of his own caste, may accept such food, provided it has been cooked with butter, from members of a lower caste. This goes on all through the social scale, and so milk is the common food of all castes.

common I mean it is the food which anybody sell or pass to anybody else.

Before the more prosaic and settled days it was death to kill a cow in a Hindu State. Unfortunately, in many parts of India it is no crime to ill-treat a cow, much less a bull. I remember a case in which a British officer in an Indian State shot a bullock which had broken its leg. There was a greater disturbance than if he had lined up a number of villagers and shot them. This officer told me the story himself. He was roughly handled by the villagers, seized by the State police and shut up in a cell for several hours while mobs howled outside. However, the police finally gave out that he had been bitten away and drowned. Thereafter, he was removed by night and escorted into British territory.

A strange superstition in India relates to certain domesticated, though once wild, animals. That is to say, the tame tiger is venerated, and sometimes even a tamed eagle or vulture. The two most venerated birds in India belong to a temple in South India at a place which has quite a short name for South India. The name is Tilukhkalikhunram. These birds are supposed to be as old as the temple itself, and the temple, both the priest and the public say, is millions of years old. The birds are vultures, and I think it is generally agreed that a really tame

vulture is not often seen. Pilgrims to the temple say that the birds are not confined in any way, but at three o'clock precisely to the minute, the birds appear from nowhere, perch on a platform and are fed by the priests.

There was a correspondent of *The Times* who disbelieved this story, and he took the trouble to go himself to the temple, which is in a very out-of-the-way spot, to disprove it. He arrived there a few hours before the vultures were due, but a crowd was already assembling and he was assured that at three o'clock the birds would arrive. He was given a special seat in order to observe them. Some minutes before the appointed time a priest took him by the arm and pointed to the horizon. There, sure enough, the journalist saw two black specks advancing at a tremendous speed and increasing rapidly in size. These presently resolved themselves into two vultures, and the gong was sounding when they dropped on the platform. If the gong did not sound precisely at three, it was so close to three that it did not matter. When the birds had settled a priest came forward with balls of some foodstuff which he waved over the birds' heads. They opened wide their beaks and the stuff was dropped in. When both had had their fill, both got up and flew away into the distance. 'This has been going on,' said one of the priests, 'for

ever and ever. Not the oldest one of us here has known a day, whatever the weather was like, when the birds did not come, and always they are the same birds. Is it any wonder that we venerate them, though they are only vultures? What makes them come, and where do they go to when they leave us?' To these questions *The Times* correspondent was not able to make any reply. He went down the hill thinking deeply.

Two or three years ago I was prompted to republish this story. Shortly afterwards I received a letter from a man who explained, not only how this bird business was done, but how it happened that certain mystics and saints living in the jungle have animals like tigers coming to them to be fed, and always at a certain fixed hour. The animals concerned, whether they are vultures or tigers, are, of course, caught young. Then always at one hour and no other they are given a pill composed of flour, inside which is a small dose of opium. It is that opium the animals are after. As for the vultures living for thousands of years, that is nonsense. When a vulture is growing old, a younger one is trained to take its place.

But when one thinks about the superstitions of India, the Ohjah must come to mind. This man bears a strong resemblance to the African Juju or the Medicine Man of the Red Indians. He dresses in a

fantastic way and carries about with him all kinds of horrible and fantastic things. Ohjahs not only pretend to restore sick men to health but they insist that they can, by their arts, discover criminals and restore lost property. I think so far as their semi-police activities are concerned, they merely resort to tricks. In India very few crimes are perpetrated in a sahib's household without some of the servants knowing who did them. If the sahibs do not know it is because they are not told; but thieves and criminals are often great boasters, and they relate in the bazars how cleverly they have robbed this or that sahib. Then, very often, especially in cases of theft, a member of the household is the criminal, and it would not take the Ohjah very long to discover who the culprit was. So there are some flourishes and mumbo-jumbo and the property is found and the thief punished. I have never paid much attention to stories of the wonderful detective abilities of these magicians. Many of them belong to castes so low as to be almost outside the pale of Hinduism.

Where the sick are concerned, Ohjahs are sometimes very successful. It may be that some of their herbs and other things have a value that is not yet known to science. Nowadays the doctors are saying that various animal poisons, such as snake venom or scorpion venom, have a beneficial effect when used in the treatment of certain diseases like

cancer. I do not know whether this is true or not, but it is a fact that Ohjahs do make use of snake venom. It is not merely a case of their saying that certain substances which they produce are composed of snake venom, but they actually pay for such venom. There are men who make money by collecting snake-poison for the Ohjahs. It is a very simple matter to collect the venom which lies in the poison sac of a snake. All that needs to be done is to hold a piece of cloth in front of the snake. It strikes the cloth, ejects the poison into it, and later on the poison can be squeezed out of the cloth into a receptacle. But apart from administering drugs Ohjahs have some methods of curing people which I do not think science would approve of. In certain cases patients are lightly rubbed over not only on the afflicted spots but all over the body with nettles. The more they scream, the more relatives and other persons are pleased. Surely this is wonderful medicine ! When the man or woman is duly covered with red blisters, the Ohjah goes away. As often as not, the patient next morning says he or she is much better, for the Ohjah says that if the patient is not better the dose will have to be repeated. In other cases nettles are not used, but good and hefty canes, and again there is a threat to repeat the dose if it is not effective the first time. I regret to say that sometimes the Ohjah

is brought to treat a patient who is not ill but who deserves to be paid out in some way; in fact there is the joke about Ohjahs and mothers-in-law. If such a relative is not loved in the household, it is said that she is ill. Then along comes the Ohjah.

The Ohjah can also bring rain, and he has the dreadful power of withering trees. Even those village people who think him rather a joke as a physician believe that he can make rain to fall. And if a tree becomes prematurely old, they say that an Ohjah has done it. In Northern India, particularly in those parts that come under a Tibetan influence, rain-makers go about in groups, visiting villages in rotation and offering to ensure that there are good crops during the spring. The insurance is not only against drought, but against storms and floods. The rain-makers are not paid very large sums, but they do get some money. The men come every year, except in the year succeeding drought or floods. Naturally they keep away then, but they send another group that are not known to the villagers as failures. By means of this rotation the rain-makers, as a whole, continue to keep their custom. They form a very close trade union, and I think it is true that they put nearly all their money into a central fund which is distributed evenly amongst all those concerned, except for a small sum per head, deducted for the benefit of a mysterious

man known as the 'Great Magician.' The rain-makers, I think, originally came from Tibet, because they are Mongolian in countenance and physique.

In Tibet the rain-maker is a professional man resident in the village itself. His duty is not so much to bring rain, as to keep it off. Whenever a storm threatens it is the duty of the rain-maker to climb to the highest point in the vicinity, and sometimes that is very high and steep indeed, and there do exactly what the great Greek did, defy the lightning. He is armed with a sword or a spear, and there he utters imprecations against the elements and thrusts into space with whatever weapon he has. And he has to stay there for as long as the storm continues: he dare not return to the village. Sometimes the man does not return; the cold and exposure have killed him. Also if the storm is very severe – hailstorms are very disastrous to crops in Tibet – he dare not return at all, and so there is another outlaw – an abominable snowman.

Although there is a good deal of belief in these magicians and others, there is also a great deal of scepticism; not every man who claims to have miraculous powers is accepted as a miracle-worker; but there is one class of person about whose powers there is very little doubt. In India, power, particularly magical power, is to be gained by practising various kinds of austerities. If you show signs of

having practised various forms of self-denial you are looked upon as the most likely man to possess the power to perform miracles. Here is a story that is frequently told in India to show that mortal men may even attain to the powers the gods possess. One day a messenger came to Siva, the Destroyer, and said: 'Have you no common sense, or are you merely ignorant of the fact? Do you not know that in the forest of Brindaban there is a man of the Teli caste who is practising such a terrible austerity that he is very likely soon to be equal with yourself?'

'Why?' said Siva. 'What is he doing?'

'Well, he is hanging by his toes from the bough of a tree, and he has now done that for two years.'

Siva was alarmed. He whispered something to the messenger. On hearing this, the messenger took Siva's sword and went down to the forest of Brindaban. There he found the Teli, and addressed him as follows:

'You have committed a great sin in trying to make yourself the equal of a god. Luckily you have been caught in time. Now my orders are to cut off your head. But because of what you have done, Siva has made up his mind that after you are dead you will be born a Brahman.'

A Teli, it should be said, is an oil-presser, a low caste in India; and to be reborn a Brahman is for a

Teli a very great triumph. So the Teli prepared himself for death.

The way in which men who claim miraculous powers announce the fact that they have gone through periods of intense bodily suffering, is by displaying withered or mutilated limbs. A man can be seen with a withered arm, not hanging down by his side as would an arm which had withered naturally, but sticking straight up in the air. The man has kept it there till all the blood has drained away from it, and all the flesh has become dry and the bone has set. I have seen dozens of these men on the occasion of some great festival. On enquiry, they have told me that it takes from five to seven years of holding the arm up without moving it in the slightest degree, before it is set ; but another religious man who had nothing of this kind to show said : 'Don't believe him, sahib. What he has done is to go to Hardwar and to have one arm tied above him to the branch of a tree. He sits there with his arm tied for no more than a year, and if he says that it has taken him more than a year, he is a rascal.'

Other ascetics merely keep their fists closed till bits of nail appear on the other side of the hand, and of course the hand is useless for any purpose. I imagine this process is almost as painful as the other of the withered arm. Anyway, both classes make good money by uttering blessings or giving people

some article they have cursed in order to pass on to others, who will then themselves be cursed.

Cursing reminds me of a strange scene I once witnessed in a Punjab village. Two women were having a violent quarrel. The abuse used was very rich and strange; so strange indeed that several village people gathered round to hear what would be said next. Suddenly one of the women stopped in the middle of a sentence and pointed to the sun which was just dipping below the horizon. When the other woman noticed that, she said no more. But she took up a stone which she put inside an earthen vessel which she then covered with a lid. The two women went on their way. I asked one of the men what the incident meant, and he quoted a phrase which I think the Psalmist uses: 'Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath.' The man added that next morning the woman would take the stone out of the jar and the war would begin again.

There is an enchanted district in the vicinity of Rawalpindi through which the river Leh runs. Some years ago a party of ascetics took hold of one of their number, tied him to a tree and put him to death with strange rites and ceremonies. Afterwards when they were tried for murder they said that they were merely going through a ceremony of which they had read in a book, and which when completed would have

brought enormous wealth to everybody concerned with it. So here was a case where the pain and torture had to be borne by someone else. As a rule seekers after power only torture themselves. Sometimes they go so far that, according to a statement that was solemnly made to me by a Punjabi who should have known better, they cut off their own heads and lay them before the shrine of some god. When I enquired how they managed to do that, the reply was that very often the intention to perform some act of self-sacrifice gives a man the power to perform that act. Therefore the headless man can very easily pick up his head and carry it to a shrine.

Once I watched a shrine being built under a banyan tree. An earthen platform was built up. It was whitewashed and marked with the sign of Siva, a trident. When I enquired what the shrine was for, a man standing by said: 'Oh, that is for somebody's head.' He refused to say more than that. A few days afterwards, passing the spot, which was in a very public place – hundreds of people must have passed it daily – I was horrified to find a head there, with streams of blood running down the platform. However, closer examination showed that the head was made of clay. There was a man there with an offering of flowers, paying his devotions. 'Whose head is this?' I asked him. He

replied that it was his own head. Further conversation drew from him the statement that some strange god of his own was very careless and would mistake the head for a real human head, and that strange powers would come to the owner of the head.

'Come now,' I said, 'what powers do you expect to get?'

The reply was: 'I am an ignorant man and I have asked for knowledge.'

Some of the lower castes in India are very fond of proclaiming their ignorance. But then their ignorance covers all kinds of crimes. They say that they do not know good from bad. I was reporting a case once, taking down questions and answers, without exactly thinking of what I was taking down. When I was writing out my report I found I had put down the following:

Question: Why was your evidence so different in the lower courts?

Reply: I am an ignorant man and have no regard for the truth.

The lawyer who had asked the question was still in the room, and I turned to him and quoted this passage and asked him whether I had taken it down correctly or not, and his reply was: 'Yes, that is quite right. I made a special note of it myself.'

So far as superstitions are concerned, I think judges and magistrates and people of that sort in

India come across more instances of the part superstition plays in India than do most European residents. There is no doubt that when a man swears on the head of his son, it is very likely he will tell the truth, but an experienced magistrate told me that he always took good care, when a man swore this terrible oath, to enquire whether the child produced was his son or not. Sometimes a strange boy is produced from the bazar and an oath which is valueless is sworn on his head. The boy gets nothing except a thump or two when it is all finished.

Oaths are also sworn on the water of the Ganges. That is to say, a bottle of water is sometimes produced; the witness is told that it is Ganges water and he proceeds to take an oath. Some people think water from the sea is as good to swear an oath upon, and the fact that instances have occurred in which witnesses have refused to swear on Ganges or salt water shows that some tremendous importance must attach to either of these.

Some years ago a man wrote to me asking for information about the meaning of a strange scene he had witnessed from his window. A syce was engaged in putting a bridle and a bit on another syce. Of course he could not fasten it quite properly, but in the end the bit was in the other man's mouth. When it was in, the other man began to

jump and twist and pretend to gallop in the same way that boys do when they are playing at horses. This business went on for about twenty minutes; then the bridle was taken off and the two men went on their way. I was unable to explain the meaning of this performance; the whole affair looked like something out of the *Arabian Nights*.

Something similar, in a way, was witnessed by myself in Lahore on the Multan Road. I had been out in that direction when a man came running past; he stopped for a moment to tell me not to go any further because there was a tyrant on the road who would certainly jump on my shoulders and make me carry him. I replied: 'What nonsense. I don't know what you mean by the word tyrant.' The man shrugged his shoulders and went his way; and I went mine.

A little distance up the road I saw what I thought was a camel approaching. In a few minutes the camel resolved itself into a man riding on the shoulders of another, quite in the fashion described in 'Sindbad the Sailor.' When the pair came closer I noticed the man who was riding the other carried a whip in his hand with which he was striking the other very savagely. When they came close enough the 'horse' cried out to me: 'For God's sake, sahib, get this man off. He will kill me.' On my making a movement towards the pair, the rider got

off with remarkable rapidity and darted into a field close by, while the man whom he was riding fell on the road exhausted. I was wondering what to do with him because there was no one about, when a party of villagers and others came riding down the road. They asked me whether I had seen the tyrant, and I pointed to the field into which he had run. The men were after him in an instant, and presently there were shouts and yells and the sound of beating. I did not attempt to interfere, though I stayed to see what the end of the incident was to be. Finally, the villagers left the rider, by no means dead, and prepared to return home. Their explanation was that the man they had beaten was a well-known character who was in the habit of leaping on the shoulders of people and making them take him for a ride. 'He must be mad,' I said. 'Not so mad,' was the reply, 'because for every man he rides in this fashion he will live one year longer, and the man he rides will live one year less. We have been on the watch for this fellow for some time. Already it has been noticed that men in the village have been cut off in their prime.' Perhaps the incident of the syce putting a bit into the mouth of another had something to do with a similar superstition.

Merchants and traders often watch for signs and omens before they do business with anybody. Pigeons are considered very lucky, and that is why

in some quarters of any big trading city in India where Marwaris reside there are many pigeons. For a pigeon to fly over one's head in the morning is a very good sign. Anything in the morning in the shape of the unusual is a good thing. It is good to do business early in the morning, a fact that few Europeans who are trading with Indians understand. They want to stick to the usual hours. They abhor getting up at all to discuss the price of wheat or rice or piece-goods. One of the reasons why in the days before the war the Germans were getting a firm footing in the European trade with India was because they did not mind getting up at dawn. I used to know one or two men, Germans, connected with the hide trade very well, and they told me that it had been quite a simple thing for them to oust their British rivals. The hide bazar, they said, opened at dawn. The British merchants refused to do any business before ten o'clock, so that practically finished them.

This preference for the dawn extends to other things besides trade. In Calcutta, amongst the best classes of Indians, it is quite a usual thing to start tea-parties before the sun has risen. There are some politicians and others who, in order to stay in the popular eye, keep open house from dawn to about eight or nine o'clock. This open house is not very expensive, because the host only provides tea and

biscuits. I have been to one of these tea-parties and found it very amusing: everybody was lively and talkative, and of course there was a freshness of the air which was very invigorating.

In Europe midnight is always supposed to be the hour suitable for charms and ghosts and incantations. In India the suitable time is always either sunrise or sunset, and it is worth noting that Mussalmans use these hours as suitable for prayer. In religious and orthodox households in India the priest who is maintained by the family always wakes the gods at sunrise. In temples they blow conches. That, I suppose, is the most difficult instrument in the world to get any sound out of. Sometimes the conch sounds much more beautiful than at other times; those are lucky occasions.

CAVES IN FACT AND FABLE

Mention has been made in the first chapter of the cave in which the great snake is supposed to dwell. And, though knowledge of them is not general, there are great caves that actually do exist in India. Except on the North-West Frontier, the majority of these caves are natural and not hewn out by hand. In some cases stone-cutters and others have been at work with their chisels and tools and fashioned a natural cave into a temple. These caves are known to all tourists and photographs of them are on sale in places where tourists congregate. Pictures are to be found in books, and sculptors and artists have studied the caves for their decorations. I know of one such cave in Hyderabad (Deccan) which an artist studied for many months in an attempt to copy the mural paintings it contained. Adjoining that cave was another which had no decorations. It was inhabited by a tiger. Higher up the hill, and lower down also, there were other caves in which bees had built their nests. The artist was a Hindu; the paintings were of a religious nature; and the Hindu had all the

detachment of his kind. He was so busy with his studies that he was indifferent to the fact that a tiger spent the greater part of the day in the adjoining cave. He would probably not have mentioned the tiger when talking about his stay in the cave, but for the fact that some Gond boys were in the habit of creeping up the hill opposite to the cave and from there annoying the tiger by discharging pellets at it from their bows. Everybody should know the Gond pellet-bow. Instead of one string, it has two, which are kept apart for an inch or so by the insertion of a little bit of wood. Half way down the strings is a bit of cloth which is sewn on, and in that pocket is lodged a hard pellet made of clay. At thirty or forty yards such a pellet can kill the biggest birds, and the Gonds carry this bow especially to kill birds with.

The boys must have concealed themselves behind some jutting rock a hundred or more yards away. From this point they would discharge pellets into the cave in the hope of baiting the beast. Presumably the tiger never suspected that the boys were behind the smart stinging sensation it often felt on its flanks.

Finally, unable to put up with annoyance and certain that bees were causing it, it would spring up and dash out of the cave with a great 'wouf-wouf,' while the Gond boys shrieked with laughter. The

artist in his cave never thought for a moment that he might, or should, take steps to dislodge the tiger, though the attacks annoyed him every day. He had no animosity against the tiger, but he disliked the boys who spent their time in irritating a creature that had done them no harm. In the end the boys were warned off by the civil authorities to whom the artist had complained. Is this not a very good instance of the different ways in which Orientals and Westerners think ? I am certain that a European artist would have either given up the study of those mural paintings or have taken steps to dislodge that tiger permanently by means of a rifle.

In Western India there are regions which are literally studded with caves, but the mouths of such caves are overgrown with brushwood and that is why they have been ignored. They cannot be seen. The caves are particularly numerous in the vicinity of Pachmarhi. They are in fact so numerous that, in spite of a deep-rooted legend that has grown up round them, people have given up the task of finding the one cave which, if found, would bring them riches beyond the dreams of avarice. I am not here talking about a legend which is merely a legend, for there may be a great deal of truth in it. Listen ! Everybody has heard of the Mahrattas and that 'chouth' they levied from everybody in the territories they conquered or swept over. 'Chouth' means one

quarter; this was the tribute that everybody who wished to live safely in the presence of a Mahratta ruler or of Mahratta troops had to pay. The Mahrattas held a sway which extended from the Western Ghauts to the Bay of Bengal for seven or eight decades. You can imagine how great was the treasure they collected during that period. A quarter of what they collected went straight to the Peishwa, whose headquarters were at Nagpur. The time came, of course, when there was no longer room in India for a Mahratta sovereignty in opposition to English rule, and an English army was set on the march to Nagpur. The city was taken. Instructions had been sent to our army that, whatever happened, the treasure of the Peishwas should be preserved intact. But when the treasury was opened only a few lakhs of rupees were found in it. Naturally there was a great to-do and for a little time the suspicion was entertained that the British troops had looted the treasury. But by degrees the truth came out. It appears that months before Nagpur was captured a great train of bullock carts had been brought to the treasury and there loaded with jewels and gold and silver. The train was then moved under an escort to one of these caves near Pachmarhi. The carters unloaded their burdens and carried them into the caves. When they had completed the task they were set upon by the escort and

every man was killed. Later on, the escort, returning to Nagpur, were set upon by a large body of soldiers sent out for that purpose, and massacred to the last man. And so the secret of the hiding-place of the treasure was lost. Those who have told me this story add that a few nobles of the highest rank were entrusted with the task of stopping the mouth of the cave. One of them stayed at the entrance for several years watching the growth of the shrubs and grass that had been planted to hide the entrance. When nothing showed, the nobleman left, and, later on, even he was unable to say where the cave had been. This story is widely believed, and I have a good reason for saying that during the war the Government of India seriously entertained for a time the idea of combing the hills round Pachmarhi in the hope of finding the treasure. I do not think that an actual attempt was made; if it was made the fact was kept a secret. Many secret deeds were done in India during the war. I have heard another story of gold-seeking by the Government of India during those years, and I think that then actual steps were taken, that is to say, a secret mission was sent out to prospect in a certain part of India where gold was reported to have been found. But this was a mining venture and had nothing to do with caves, so there is no point in telling any more of the story. Somebody produced a bit of gold, but no more was found

in the place where it was said to have been discovered.

There are other caves besides those in Western India. I cannot mention caves without thinking of the caves that occur in the neighbourhood of Cherrapunji. To most people in India Cherrapunji is merely known as the wettest spot on earth. Eight hundred inches a year is the average rainfall. This village rests on the top of stupendous cliffs that rise several thousand feet straight up from the plains of Sylhet. If you take a car from Shillong you will presently find yourself nearly on the edge of the cliff. The view, of course, is magnificent, that is to say, when there are no clouds about. But rising steeply as they do, moisture must condense on them, and hence the incessant and heavy rain. The caves are on the face of the mountains which rise from the plain: they are not easily got at and have never been thoroughly explored. No one wants to do that. It is not merely the difficulty of deep wells and flowing water; what explorers are afraid of are landslides inside the caves. It is with the greatest difficulty that any of the local people can be induced to venture inside. I remember a man, who had penetrated the biggest cave with two companions, telling me that he was amazed, when after three or four hours, in course of which the party had lost their way, to find on emerging into daylight that his hair had not gone

grey. All the time they were inside they heard the slow, soft, swishing sound of earth falling into the streams of water that were running at the bottom of all the avenues they explored. What was falling was not earth but shale, and from what this man and others have said or written I am convinced that the Cherrapunji caves are set in a tremendous hollow in the cliffs, the interior of which is composed of shale. When I first made this suggestion one or two men said that such a geological formation as a mountain of loose shale set inside another mountain of rock of some kind was not possible. Some years later the railway which had just been built over the Khyber was suddenly interrupted by a subsidence of the track in the middle of a tunnel. Examination showed that the rock through which the tunnel had been made had inside it large quantities of some kind of soft, pliable earth or rock. What the engineers did was to scoop out all this soft earth and fill the hole with concrete. The operation cost a fabulous sum.

Mention of the Khyber leads me to think of the Afridi caves. A certain number of them may be seen not far from Jamrud. These are inhabited by a poor and mean class of Pathan, so poor that I am not sure that they are acknowledged by the Afridis. But if you entered the Bazar Valley (which, by the way, you are not allowed to do), you would find

many hundreds of caves which are inhabited by a virile people. I have been in these caves, but I and the officer who was with me left them hastily. There was nobody in them at the time because there was a war on and the inhabitants had left for fear of being blockaded. But we ran out of the caves because they were full of fleas. You cannot conceive how many fleas there were, and it struck me as wonderful that any human being could possibly live in such habitations. Later on, I talked with the Afridis about these caves, and when I mentioned the fleas they laughed. 'It is quite true,' they said, 'the fleas are a great disadvantage, but not so much a disadvantage as getting a bullet through the head, as we should if we lived in the open.'

'But,' I said, 'you left the caves in order to get away from bullets.'

'Those were your bullets.'

'Yes, but when you got into the open, weren't you afraid of bullets from the people with whom you carried on blood feuds?'

'No. Because when we are fighting the Government all blood feuds are temporarily at an end.'

So that was it. Continuing our conversation I asked the man whether these caves were natural or dug out. He said that they were dug out, and when I enquired whether they ever fell in, his reply was 'Often. Many Afridis have been killed by the earth

falling on them.' Then he grinned as if it were a good joke. Then followed a story. He said that on one occasion some traitor had told the Government of a large body of Zakha Khel who had come down into the Kajuri Plains with an intent to raid a house in the vicinity of Peshawar. The whole of the mobile column came out and surrounded the cave in which the raiders were sheltering. When some men had cautiously climbed to the entrance and later examined the cave, no one was found in it, and the column returned to Peshawar disappointed. Moreover, the informant who had given the party away got into serious trouble with the civil authorities. 'But,' said this aged rogue, 'we were in the cave all the time.'

'Then how is it you were not discovered?'

'These caves are not single caves but have several large rooms, communication being through a very small hole which can only be entered by men lying on their stomachs. All we had to do was to close that hole, which could be done very quickly. We were safe inside another cave when your troops came nosing around.'

'Were you not in danger of suffocation?'

'Indeed we were, and if the troops had stayed a quarter of an hour longer, we would have had to disclose ourselves. So, you can see there is a merit in fleas.'

Obviously, the troops who had entered the cave had glanced swiftly around and then bolted, just as I had. Had they looked carefully they would not have failed to notice the fresh earth that was covering the entrance to the other cave.

It is strange that there should be no enormous cavern in the Himalayas. But that is so. I suppose the geological formation is such as not to permit of caves. There are a few though, and there is a legend that a series of caves exists in the Mussoorie hills, all connected with one another. If one could find the entrance it would be possible to descend from cave to cave into the Dun. Certain it is that waterfalls do disappear into holes in the ground in the vicinity of Mussoorie and are never seen again. I suppose the water reappears somewhere in the Dun.

There is a fairly well-known cave in the cliffs opposite Dharasu on the road to Gungotri. But very few people would take the trouble to leave the road and visit the cave; to get to it would involve a two-days' march across precipices, but with four or five other men I did this once. We found the cave easily enough because it is in the face of a cliff and has a wide black mouth. There was no kind of path-way into the cave; evidently it was not even used by animals. We got a few yards into it and then were repelled by the droppings from multitudes

of bats that were suspended on the roof above. On coming out, one of the party said, 'I will soon have those bats out,' and he then fired a shot into the cavern. What followed was terrifying, for the bats that came out of that cave literally darkened the sky, and the sound that was made by the swishing of their wings was like the sound made by a mighty hurricane. Something made me think of the famous winged cavalry of the Polish kings. These horse-men had attached to the top of their helmets a string of plumes which ran down the helmet, along the back, and finally ended at a buckle on the waist-belt. When the cavalry moved the plumes made a swishing sound. When the cavalry charged the swishing sound was changed into a mighty roaring wind. Anyway, the man who fired that shot was shaken a good deal. I said to him, 'Now you have driven the bats out perhaps you will be the first to go into the cave.' But he wouldn't, on the ground that the bats that had come out might have only been the front section of the bat army. So we left those caves alone.

It is curious how instinctively people dread bats. We seem to be afraid of them, though it is only in the West Indies and parts of South America that vampire bats are to be found. There are none in India. I have heard ignorant persons call the big fruit-bat, sometimes styled a flying fox, 'vampire,' but it is

quite a harmless creature. No blood about it. But it is very destructive to fruit. A certain class of Indian gipsies net this bat and eat it, and I have been told by one or two planters that it can be turned into a very good curry. I for one should not care to eat it, though, mind you, when the wings are folded the creature hardly looks like a bat at all, for the body is covered with fur.

But, if there are no large caves in the Himalayas, almost anywhere you can find nooks and cosy corners, and very often these are inhabited not by foxes or wild cats but by holy men. Sometimes a holy man will get himself into a corner of the kind mentioned and himself close the entrance with stones and earth, except for a very small orifice through which a man might put his hand. He takes care to inform the nearest village of what he is doing and the villagers, aware that he is practising self-imposed austerities, bring him food and milk for fear that, when the vigorous process is completed and he has attained magical powers, he will revenge himself on those who neglected him. But in one case a coolie I had went out of his way to beg some rice from me which he might cook for a holy man whose cave we had passed on the march. This coolie could not have been afraid of any revenge that the *sādhu* could have taken on him, and it was pure goodness of heart that led him to make the offering at my

expense. In Tibet this practice of immuring oneself is carried too far, for the Tibetans betake themselves into coffins where they remain for ten years or more. There is only a small hole in the coffin, through which food is passed, and these monks cannot sit up in their coffins. How they can bear to endure that kind of home for ten years at a time, baffles me, but I have seen quite small boys in a monastery who were looking forward quite eagerly to the time when they would spend ten years in a coffin. Too long.

Now for the greatest cavern of all, one which according to Hindu legend lies below the cave in which the great serpent dwells; it is said to be the cavern which contains a great sea, the sea into which much of the water of the Ganges flows and which is connected in the same way with other great and holy rivers. This interior sea is not merely considered a legend. Even educated Hindus believe in it, and I know of one man, a European versed in science and medicine, who is firmly convinced that such a sea exists. He told me once, quite seriously, that the sea ran along the whole length, though many hundreds of feet down, of the Ganges valley and also extended southward as far as the Vindhya range. I must say, though, that when I asked him if he had any geological proof of what he said, he was not able to produce any; nor can the Hindu pundits

But there is the story, and they have got a firm belief in it. In addition to the cave there is another story of an enormous hole at the head of the Bay of Bengal. The hole, they say, was dug by a mighty people who had their headquarters in that locality, which at one time was dry land. These people were aware of the virtues of the Ganges, which at that time ran a good deal to the north of its present course. They thought it was a great pity that all the water of the Ganges should be wasted in the sea, so they proceeded to dig this enormous hole which would serve as a reservoir for the Ganges water. But although aware of the virtues of the Ganges they were not aware of the sanctity of the river nor of the danger and foolishness of desecrating Mother India. They were permitted to dig out the inland sea which they projected. Millions of men were employed in the excavation work, the story says, and they had practically finished the task which the purblind ruler had set them. All that needed to be done was to clear the banks left by the workmen and to cut away the last barrier between the river and the channel which had already been made for it to flow down. But before a single pick was laid to that last barrier the Ganges rose and swept it away. The torrent rushed into the lake that had been made and drowned every man working within. More than that, the lake overflowed and the waters rushed

headlong into the sea; so that not only was the lake rendered useless for the purpose for which it had been made but a great deal of cultivated land was lost, and merged into the Bay of Bengal.

This fantastic story is supported by references to a certain great hole that still does exist at the head of the Bay. It is, of course, part of the sea now and all the water is salt. Several hundred years ago, a great Portuguese ship was coming slowly up the Bay of Bengal looking for the mouth of the Hughli. It had gone out of its course; the navigator did not quite know where he was, and he was bringing the ship slowly up by guess and by lead. Imagine the leadsman calling out the depth of water, which grows shallower and shallower as he proceeds. Presently there is no sound from him and somebody on the poop is about to call down to him to enquire what he is doing, when there comes a sudden shout from him: 'No ground,' meaning that the lead has been swung out to its fullest extent but has not been able to touch bottom. The navigator, surprised, instructs the leadsman to keep on casting. Always there is the same call: 'No ground.' There are probably three or four miles of no ground. Then suddenly the leadsman finds that the lead is touching bottom again. The sea then begins to shoal very rapidly, and after a few minutes the ship is back again in shallow water.

This hole in the bed of the sea presently became known to all mariners. It may have shifted in the course of centuries, because if it is a hole in the sand such a shifting is not impossible. Anyway at the present time the hole is in the sea somewhere below Barisal and not below Calcutta. It is known to seamen and is even marked on the charts as the 'Swatch of No Ground.' A mariner told me that the word was applied to a race of waters between two rocks, but I do not think, myself, that that is correct. At least, the Swatch of Barisal cannot be connected with any rock. Later on, by accident, I found that there was another 'Swatch of No Ground' at the mouth of the Indus. Now I believe that in those older days the term 'swatch' was applied to any kind of eddy, whether between rocks or not. Unfortunately, though the 'Swatch of No Ground' is now marked on the charts and referred to in gazetteers, I have never met anyone who has actually sailed over the Swatch near Barisal and who could tell me whether there are any giant eddies there or not. It has been suggested that this Swatch is responsible for the phenomenon known as the 'Barisal Guns,' which are dull and heavy reports like those of distant artillery, heard in parts of Bengal. The water in the Swatch may be going round and round and then the eddy might be suddenly met inside the gigantic hole by another

current caused by a storm running in the opposite direction. The meeting of the waters against the bowl of the hole might cause, from time to time, sudden explosions of sound. This seems to me too fantastic and I refuse to believe it. But the Swatch is there and how it came to exist is a mystery, for the bed of the sea all round is surely sand and nothing else, sand brought down during the course of centuries by the mighty rivers that flow into the Delta of the Ganges.

It is common to speak of the Delta of the Ganges, but why the Ganges should be specially mentioned I do not know. For an even mightier river flows into the Bay of Bengal – the Brahmaputra. It is true that the two rivers are united before they reach the sea, but the Brahmaputra brings a much larger volume of water into the common stream. Once I was severely reprimanded by a tourist for saying that the name of the river which fell into the sea at the head of the Bay of Bengal was unknown to most educated men. He said he thought I was rather rude, because he knew the name of both the rivers I have mentioned. What he didn't know was that the two streams when united have a new name, not only to Indians, but also on the maps. Why that name should be overlooked is a great mystery. It is 'Padma.'

During the great Behar earthquake, in a multitude

of places enormous spouts of water came gushing out of the earth, and this fact was quoted as proof of the statement that 'loose' water existed underneath the soil, for if the water was absorbed in the soil it could not be thrown out as pure water. I think that the earthquake, and the water that came up with it, has terrified the peasantry of Behar more than anything else in their experience. I have talked to Beharis and they have said that they live in constant fear, not of the earth shaking but of it caving in and dropping them into the internal sea. I have said, 'Don't talk rubbish,' and that remark, coming from somebody who professed to know all about everything, seems to carry *some* reassurance.

But now let me tell you of some remarkable results achieved by a man, a solitary scientist, who made a study of the earthquake by himself. He had a great map of India and he was attempting to trace in concentric circles how far the earthquake had extended and how it decreased in violence the further it went. He had before him all the reports about the earthquake that were printed in newspapers in various parts of India and made notes as to the kind of destruction wrought by the shocks. Presently he found that this system of concentric circles did not work. Some of the places within the circles never experienced any shocks at all. Other

places which should have only had moderate shocks had very severe ones; two places within a few miles of each other experienced shocks of widely varying intensity. Presently this observer, making use of his pencil, found that the earthquake could be shown in a graph which resembled not a series of circles but a kind of star of which the rays were of different lengths. He described his graph to me as resembling something that might be drawn if it were proposed to describe the kind of effect which a stone thrown at a pane of glass might have. One or two of the rays extended to quite a distance; others broke off quite short from the centre of the disturbance. He said that the impression he got after completing his investigations was that the earth had received a violent blow from below, as if something had come up and struck the crust just as a stone might strike a window pane. Had he ever heard of this belief in a great subterranean sea? I do not think he had, but those who believe in this sea, lodged in a gigantic cavern, might well use the observer's graph as some proof of the truth of their belief.

These remarks do not necessarily mean that I believe in the sea below the earth. I do not, as a matter of fact, but the idea is wild and romantic, and I refer to the 'Swatch of No Ground' and to the Behar earthquake in an attempt to convince myself that there may be some truth in it. That is the

worst of most of these tremendous legends. One wants to believe them so much that one is inclined to stretch one's imagination so far that the truth gets mixed up with falsehood, and one is set down as a credulous maniac.

THE BARDS AND OTHER SINGING MEN

India is often said to contain the habits of several centuries existing together, for instance there are men who wander about India playing musical instruments and singing songs. People like the bards and minstrels, who cut such a figure in Europe in the Middle Ages, still exist in India. They are known as Bhats, and they make it their business to wander from court to court, from palace to palace, and even from house to house, telling and singing of the glories of the brave days of old. Most of their songs relate to the heroic deeds performed by the ancestors of various Rajput clans and tribes. Ruling princes among the Hindus welcome and reward them, for the Bhat not only sings songs from memory but he can improvise them. Some of these songs become a kind of historical record, and are memorised and repeated when the Bhat has gone on his way. These men are themselves Rajputs, and they claim the right to sit on equal terms with the proudest of the Indian princes. Even Brahmans have not the same privileges as the Bhats claim. They can enter

any house where feasting is in progress and claim a seat; not only a seat but one of the best seats.

Bhats, though they claim to be above the smaller distinctions of caste, do a great deal to keep caste alive. They have a genealogy of all the big Rajput families at their finger-tips. They are the people who decide whether a man has a right to marry to the East or to the West, and by East and West I do not, of course, mean India and Europe, but the East and West as it is understood in India, Purb and Pachmi ! The Rajput clans have two great divisions, the clans of the East and of the West, and though a man belonging to a Purbia clan may marry into a Pachmi family, the Pachmis cannot marry into Purbia families.

For many years I was inclined to believe that the Rajputs were so called because they were the people of Rajputana, and it is quite true that more Rajputs are settled in Rajputana than elsewhere. Practically all the rulers in Rajputana are Rajputs. Later on when I joined the army I was sent to a Rajput regiment. There I learned that the Purbia Rajputs, that is to say, Rajputs who were not settled in Rajputana but in Oudh, claimed to be senior to the Rajputs of Rajputana in many ways and particularly as regards caste; that was why Purbias could marry Pachmi women but Pachmi men could not marry Purbia women. This was certainly news to me.

And later on still, when I was sent with a company of Purbias to reinforce a Pachmi regiment, caste troubles arose at once. The Pachmis admitted that the Purbias belonged to a superior caste and were therefore unable to accept food from Pachmi cooks. They had to have cooks of their own caste. I know that as the consequence of this and other troubles I and my company were sent off post-haste to another regiment. That regiment was the 7th Rajputs. Two days before we reached Kut, where the 7th were, the Turks cut in between and, luckily for me and my men, kept us out of that ill-fated city. We were sent from one regiment to another, and most of the time I had a lot of trouble in seeing that the caste prejudices of my men were respected, because as the war proceeded it was not always easy to give my men the food and the opportunities for cooking it which are necessary to men of high caste. However, that is another story.

I used to ask my Indian officers why, if they considered themselves superior to the Pachmi Rajputs, they were not living in Rajputana. 'Surely,' I said, 'the senior castes should be those in Rajputana. You are only an off-shoot.'

'Not so,' replied the subadar. 'What do you think is the meaning of the word Rajput?'

To this I replied: 'Surely a Rajput is an inhabitant of Rajputana.'

Subadar: 'Not so. Rajput means the son of a king - Raj and putra. Rajputana is merely a part of India that the Rajputs have conquered and held just as they conquered other parts of India. The true Rajput originated in Oudh.'

An officer of Pachmi Rajputs told me that the subadar was taking advantage of my ignorance. He added that there was an army handbook relating to castes and tribes which stated distinctly that the Pachmis belonged to superior castes. His intentions were so kind that I did not like to say that an army handbook might be wrong. Only recently I had an opportunity of discussing this matter of the Rajput clans with a high Indian authority: his view was that certainly the ruling chiefs in Rajputana belonged to the highest Rajput caste, 'but,' he added, 'their subjects are considered inferior in caste to the Purbias.' So there it is.

To get back to the Bhats. They carry harps just like the minstrels of old, and I am told that some of them can play on lutes and similar instruments. More than that, a few of the most prominent of them not only sing songs about heroism on the battlefields and of the gallant deeds performed by great men of this or that clan, but also love songs. They are troubadours as well as minstrels. That, at least, is what I have been told, but I may say that I do not believe it. The Rajputs would not allow such

songs to be sung at their feasts, and the Bhat must have a big audience. He never sings for one or two men only. He must have the limelight; there must be a big feast on, and at some point in it he must be the central figure.

But the Bhat is a high man and he exists for high men only, so the common people have never heard him sing. They have their own singers, prominent among whom are the Bhangs, who provide a strange kind of comic relief to life both in the bazars and in the country, where they attend fairs, markets and other gatherings. You will never hear a Bhang in a big city like Calcutta or Bombay. He attracts too large a crowd, and a crowd of the kind which, after enjoying a performance, melts away without giving the performer any money. But it takes two to make a real Bhang. I will describe what Bhangs do.

All Bhangs are large men with fine melodious voices. I do not know whether these voices are natural or whether they go through a period of training, but I have never heard one with a cracked voice. A Bhang will come into a fair or a market-place, carrying a drum and a spear with a flag on it. He will drive the spear into the ground and then begin to beat on his drum. When sufficient attention has been directed to him (and it does not take very long, because the Bhangs and their flags are

(All known), he begins to call in a loud voice – something like this: ‘Listen, all ye people, I am Malum the Great, the noble Malum. Everybody knows me and I know everything and everybody. I have come here to sing songs about myself, because the more you know about me, the happier you will be.’ He goes on in this strain for a while; then suddenly another voice is heard, thirty or forty yards away. A drum beats and continues to beat, and presently the speech being made by the first Bhang is drowned by the voice of the other. What he says is something like this: ‘Who is the man to whom you are listening? Is it that braggart, that coward, that snake, that ape, Malum? Do not listen to him. He was born on a tree. If he swears that he was not, then all I can say is that he was born under a tree. Do not listen to him.’

Malum retorts, calling the other a frog, a mouse, a pig and names of that kind. And presently his words, though they are still abusive, begin to take a rhyming form; the man is uttering some kind of verse, but it should be noted that, although there is abuse in it, the abuse is not of that very terrible kind that one may hear in a bazar when two men are really angry with each other. The Bhang for the moment keeps within limits. As soon as he stops to take breath the other man begins to reply, also in terms which soon begin to take the

have been within hearing of the performance and demands gifts. Generally, they get a gift in kind, a handful of rice, some sweets, vegetables.

The Bhangs have their female counterparts. I used to think that the Bhangis were merely the female of this species, but I am assured by a Bengali friend that Bhangis belong to an entirely different caste. Anyway, when Indians speak of Bhangis they mean the women of that caste. They are permitted to enter into zenanas and they sing comic songs to the women. I, a man, cannot tell whether these songs are similar to the songs of the Bhangs, but in any case these women are welcomed in harems on occasions of marriage and, I understand, sometimes get a great deal of money.

The Bhangis are not to be confused with the Banghis, who are a caste of people who hire themselves out as carriers. In the early days of John Company they carried the parcel post. I myself saw the other day a label which must have come off a box. It had an address on it and the words, 'By Banghi post.' I think these Banghis were also doolie-bearers and were largely employed in the Indian Army hospitals. They are people one seldom hears much about nowadays, and I suppose they are being absorbed into occupations other than that of carrying things about for other people.

fourth class of singing people in India is a

sub-section of the Bangalas. Many Europeans believe that the Bangalas originated in Bengal : hence the term. But I do not believe that. They look like people from the United Provinces, and the songs they sing are not in Bengali but in Hindustani. Many of them are not singers but acrobats and snake charmers. I was told that only one man in each family takes up singing ; another male trains for some other accomplishment, such as rope dancing or walking about on giant stilts. I think the Bangalas are the only people among the lower castes who deliberately do not allow a child to follow its father's occupation.

Now, the Bangāla songs are lovely songs. They are not stately and dignified, like the songs of the Bhats, nor rude and vulgar like the songs of the Bhangs and Bhangis ; but the Bangalas sing little country songs, sung to small stringed instruments. There is only one man, as I have said, in a party, but there may be two or three women and a child or two. Bangala parties as a rule avoid big crowds ; it is their practice to sing in villages, and if they enter a town they will go to the shops in side streets and sing there. I have known a little concert-party of this kind bring tears to the eyes of the hard shopkeepers in Calcutta side-streets. On one occasion the chaprasi in my office begged for leave to go down the stairs and listen to a Bangala party that

was performing in the street. He said that they reminded him of his old home and the family he had left behind. This chaprasi (door-keeper) was not a man from whom I would have expected any sentiment, yet two days after he had heard these people singing he came to me and said that he had 'cut his service' and was going to his country. When I asked him why he had made this sudden decision, he replied simply that the Bangalas had reminded him of his home and fields. Their songs, as I have said, are in Hindustani, but the Hindustani is of the more rustic kind and would hardly be understood except by peasants.

If you were to ask for the name of the leading Bhats and other singers of India, you would be told that the real Bhats, the men who made the original and traditional songs of Rajput chivalry, are long since dead. The present generation of Bhats is composed mostly of men who are merely repeating what their forefathers sang. There are, of course, many great musicians in India, but they do not come into this discussion since they do not belong to any special caste. Many of the sweetest singers in India are men of the highest and most educated classes, for music in India is an art that is well understood and appreciated. But there is one name that crops up frequently. The man has been dead for many years.

He was a singer of the Bhang type, though he was not a Bhang; he was, indeed, a Feringhi. This word in India is generally used in a contemptuous sense and is applied to people of European descent who have sunk socially and in other ways. When applied to Europeans in general, the person who applies it as a rule means to be rude; it is just as offensive to say Feringhi of a European as it is to say Nigger of an Indian. The use of these words should be forbidden by law. But the word Feringhi has now a special meaning: the Feringhi caste is to be found in Eastern Bengal, and the members of it have assumed Eastern customs, wear Eastern clothes, have adopted the Bengali language, and have become cultivators.

I remember once asking a man whom I took to be a Bengali, what his name was. To my amazement he replied: 'Thomas.' On my expressing surprise, he said that he was a Christian and that he owned land in Eastern Bengal near Barisal. Later on I was told that there was quite a colony of Feringhis in the Barisal district. At one time they were living by hunting and shooting, because in the earlier days all people claiming European descent were permitted to carry firearms without obtaining permission from the police. These Feringhis also made a little money at marriage festivals and similar jubinations. They were allowed to manufacture fireworks and to let

off guns. To-day, in respect of guns, Europeans and Indians are on an equal footing. Everybody has to get a licence from the police, and if you want a licence for a revolver, the trouble in obtaining it is so great that most people, whether European or Indian, prefer to do without revolvers.

Now, at the beginning of the last century there was a Feringhi named Antony, and he became a very celebrated singer in Bengal. I find his name in a book about the great poets of India, and he is regarded as an Indian.

Antony became celebrated in rather a curious way. One day—it must have been somewhere round the year 1800—there was a quarrel in front of a large tank known as the Red Tank in the official and business part of Calcutta. There was shouting and cries of ‘Beat him,’ and a great strong voice dominating everything. The noise attracted the attention of a wealthy Bengali merchant, and he went to the spot to see what was happening. The loud voice belonged to Antony, and he was abusing certain sepoys of the Company. It turned out that these sepoys had attempted to bathe in the tank, but had been turned out by certain guards who were there to see that no bathing took place, for the tank supplied the Settlement with much of its drinking water. The sepoys, like most arrogant soldiers, said they would not take orders from any water-guard.

They set upon these guards, and it was then that Antony Feringhi interfered. He is described as a tall man with piercing eyes and a hawk-like face. His interference did not take the form of physical violence. He merely told the sepoys what he thought of them, and so savage and terrible was the language that he used that the sepoys presently shut their ears and made off.

Our Calcutta merchant was pleased at what he had seen and heard, for he was looking out for a man who had the kind of gift that Antony Feringhi possessed.

This merchant's desire for a man skilled in vituperation throws a strange light upon the social life of the wealthier Bengalis of those days. I am told that many Europeans also took part in, or were present among the audience at the performances I am about to describe. These performances consisted of 'abuse-with-music' parties. A man who wanted to entertain his friends would ask them to a feast at which, after the eating and drinking was over, a master of abuse with music would begin his recitations. These masters were not professional Bhangs but men belonging to various castes or even amateurs who thought themselves gifted in this particular direction. But at parties the abuse was not levelled at somebody who was in the pay of the performer, but at the guests. One guest was picked

upon, very often the chief guest, and at him were levelled all the criticisms that the performer could think of. The attack was mild at first, but before it was over the victim was writhing under the sneers and jibes and general attacks that the critic made. Meanwhile the audience rocked with laughter. The higher the rank of the man attacked, the greater the laughter. After one guest had been laid low, it was the turn of another, and a good 'gali-wallah' would go through all the guests present, pointing out the weak points of each, criticising their ancestry and making those laugh who had recently been writhing under a similar attack. It was supposed to be the height of bad form to resent this abuse with music. The one man who was not attacked was the host himself, but Bengali society of course would not tolerate the host escaping scot-free; one day he would be asked to a party, and then perhaps the very man whom he had hired to abuse others would select him as the principal object of attack.

The Bengali merchant who picked up Antony Feringhi must have suffered severely at a party, for he took some trouble in having Antony trained in music and the arts of rhyming. Then there came a day when he released Antony upon the world, and remember that the leading performer at these abuse-with-music parties had to be well acquainted with the family and personal history of the man he was

attacking. Unless there was some kind of truth behind what he said the shaft would fly wild, but Antony had memorised what he had been told about various leading members of Bengali society. His success was instantaneous. So great did his vogue become, that finally the merchant who had introduced him to this method of earning a livelihood had to allow him to set up on his own. As everybody wanted him at a party Antony soon became a rich and distinguished man. I have tried to get hold of some of the rhymes that Antony made, but it is not easy. There may not have been strict laws about libel or slander in those days, but somehow nobody seems to have kept any Antonian verses; it seems a pity.

Both Bengali and Hindustani are languages melodious enough to entice into poetry anybody who speaks them. They are like some of the Latin languages, and that is one reason why India is so full of poets. It is possible to find aged men in Calcutta to-day who will say that the old fire and vigour has gone out of Bengali verse, but what they are really lamenting is the passing of Antony Feringhi and his type of verse. There is still one relic in Bengal of those abuse-with-music days, and that is a procession which passes annually through the streets of Calcutta taking off in various ways the lives and activities of prominent people. For

instance, you will see, in a highly decorated car, a man got up to represent some famous Nationalist leader. He is in the act of changing his European clothes for Indian ones, and the car has a legend to the effect that as a caller is entering the house the quick-change artist must show that he is firstly an Indian, who would not dream of wearing European clothes. This would be a jibe at some quite famous man who was not above wearing dress clothes at a European restaurant, though on a Nationalist platform he would denounce everything European. An Indian may laugh at a foreigner (and small wonder), but he is the first to laugh at his own foibles.

GIPSIES AND THEIR WAYS

The Bhangs and the Bhangis form only a tiny subsection of the two great gipsy tribes in India, the Oads and the Nats. These people must be considered to be within the pale of Hinduism. They are not outside it like the forest and aboriginal tribes. It is easy enough to distinguish between the Oads and the Nats by reason of the physical differences between the two. The Oads are great, tall, broad-faced men, the Nats are small and lean-looking. I imagine the Oads are of Aryan descent and the Nats are Aboriginal. In the old days when the Aryans first descended upon India nearly the whole of Eastern India, including the greater portion of the Gangetic Plain, consisted of a forest. It was a forest which as a matter of fact extended not only to the edges of the Bay of Bengal, but was continued on the other side of the Bay into Burma and thence right across to the Pacific. It was a gigantic forest. On the edge of it, that is to say, in the country now known as the Punjab, the Aryans settled, and there they elaborated that strange code known as the

Laws of Manu. Chief amongst these laws are those which divide the Hindu people into the four great castes, out of which all the other castes have sprung. There were the priestly caste, the fighting caste, the trading caste, and the labouring caste. The Oads, I think, were from the first outside these castes; although they could not be admitted into the two higher castes, they were still fighting men. In the older days they were probably the pioneers, the men who defended the edge of the forest, and were constantly engaged with the enemy inside, the enemy being represented by Punjab dwellers who had been driven into the forest as a result of the Aryan advance. These fighters were the people, I think, who gave the name to the province of Oudh. In consequence of their continual warfare with the Nats, they would not be able to observe the ritual imposed by Manu upon the fighting caste left behind in the more settled parts. They would have their own way in the matter of food. One can imagine how the liberty they had in this and other directions would lead to the formation of quite a number of subcastes; in some parts certain members of the fraternity would be able to keep away from certain food, and being proud of that fact would give themselves a special name.

Then the Nats, though not Aryans, would presently begin to get ideas of caste themselves. That

often happens where two races are in conflict; intermingling takes place in spite of skirmishing and social customs are exchanged. The Nats have their own castes, and sub-sections too, but whereas the Oad clans generally take their name from the animals they must not eat, the Nats take them from the animals they make a practice of eating. So we have amongst the latter the Gidharias, the jackal-eaters, and the Samperias, the serpent-eaters. I am told that the Oads and the Nats are now inter-marrying, but this I find hard to believe because even sub-sections of each tribe will not inter-marry.

At one time - we are speaking of course of a period before the historical - the Aryans, settled in the Punjab, were depending solely on the Oads for protection against attacks of the people whom they had displaced, and I suppose the Oads, too, were wary of incessant warfare. In any case raids into the Aryan settlement became more ferocious and penetrated deeper. One raid led by some man from the far south even managed to penetrate to the capital, and the raiders carried off the ruler's wife. This event startled the Aryans, who had been slinking into sloth and luxury. The warrior caste was particularly roused, and the ruler himself made ready for battle, a battle that was to be on a large scale. It was not merely an expedition that Rama planned. It was a

conquest, and the plan was to subdue, not merely the tribes in the Punjab and Oudh, but the whole of India. The campaign which followed must have lasted for twenty or thirty years. As the Aryans penetrated deeper and deeper into the forest, after entirely vanquishing the Nat tribes, they came into contact with aboriginals of even a lower kind, so low indeed that they are described in Hindu traditional stories as apes and bears; but these apes and bears, strange to relate, instead of attacking the invading hosts became very friendly with them, and assisted them on their march to the furthest end of India. When the great prince Rama crossed from India into Ceylon the apes and bears still followed him and took part in the assault on the Monster Ravan, who was alleged to have been the leader of that tribe that had carried away Sita.

And this is the place for a little story about the big ape Hunuman who accompanied Rama on the campaign. When the monster Ravan was killed and Sita released from captivity Hunuman begged for permission to absent himself for seven days. Asked why he wanted leave, he hung his head and refused to reply; however Rama gave him the necessary permission and Hunuman disappeared. The reason for his private expedition was that when the grounds of the great palace Ravan had erected were entered, Hunuman had spotted a walled garden

full of ripe mangoes. Hunuman, being an ape, wanted to spend the whole seven days eating mangoes. When he started his banquet, he found the mangoes so delicious that he decided that the fruit must be cultivated in India. Thereupon, after he had sucked a mango he threw the seed a few thousand miles into the further parts of India, and that is how the mango came to India.

The memory of the campaign which made all India Aryan still persists in India. The great war is celebrated several thousands of years after in the festival known as the Dasara and Durga Pujah. In Bengal the origin of the festival has been forgotten, and the ceremonies connected with it are not of a warlike kind. In fact there are Bengali authorities who say that the Durga Pujah has nothing to do with the campaign of which I have spoken; but in the Punjab and elsewhere the Dasara festival is marked by processions which recall the story I have told. There are monster wooden cars on which are shown the images of Rama and Sita. These are escorted by men and boys wearing tails and pretending to be bears and monkeys. All round them dance swordsmen and spearmen and pikemen. A second car contains the image of the monster Ravan. This image is made of wood and paper and, when the procession is over at the edge of some great open space, the monster is taken roughly from his car and

placed on a bonfire, and when the flames rise there is intense rejoicing and people leap a yard high and congratulate each other.

On one occasion at Lahore I saw, at the time when the excitement was at its highest, a Mussalman appear on the edge of the crowd, pull out his praying mat and kneel in prayer. I do not know what the intention was; the real hour for prayer had not yet arrived and what I thought was that the object of the man was really to provoke the Hindu multitude, but nothing happened. When Hindus and Mussalmans, too, make a day of festivity, it remains a day of festivity and they will not let their angry passions rise. On other occasions I have seen Hindu Sadhus and others professing extreme forms of Hinduism marching unmolested amongst Mussalman crowds on a feast day, and even begging for and receiving alms.

But where were the Oads during this great campaign of which Rama was the hero? They are not mentioned at all. One imagines that when the fighting caste woke up from their lethargy and took a part in the campaign they would not permit the Oads, who had lost any caste standing they had, to share battle with them. The Oads were just put aside, and presently came to take their place amongst the lower castes; they were not numbered with the twice-born; but they have retained their warlike

traditions through all these centuries. On the other hand they have sunk so low in the social scale that even during the war, when all kinds of castes were indented upon for soldiers, no one thought of the Oads. And do you know when they were last thought of? They were thought of by that Sir Arthur Wellesley who became the Duke of Wellington. Though the Oads, in the more recent centuries, were not permitted to become soldiers, one great branch of them definitely had a place in an army on the march. They formed the commissariat department, supplying the grain to the troops. The name given to them was Brinjara.

When one prince made a war upon another he sent word to the nearest Brinjara tribe and these people came along with their pack bullocks and their bullock carts loaded with grain and foodstuffs to be sold to the army. So it was a comparatively easy matter in those days to make a war. There was no question of collecting supplies and making elaborate arrangements for carrying them on the march. The Brinjaras did that. Whichever way the battle went the Brinjaras were not touched. A pursuing army left them alone, for who knew when that army would not be depending on Brinjaras to supply it with food. Yet there was always a danger that some troops would get out of hand and, finding themselves in the middle of a Brinjara encampment,

would make an attempt at loot. So the Brinjaras were always prepared to defend their possessions. They carried weapons, even the women and children had bows and arrows, for when Brinjaras followed an army they always took their families with them. That is an Oad habit. Now, not only did Hindu princes make use of the Brinjaras, but the British also did in the earlier days. I have mentioned Sir Arthur Wellesley. It was after watching a train of Brinjaras passing by, the men marching by the side of their carts with their spears on their shoulders, and women and children sitting on the carts with their bows and arrows, that the great soldier thought that something might be made of these people. But nothing came of this idea. I suppose that by that time they had got into the settled habit of thinking that in spite of their warlike traditions their business was not that of actual warfare. Perhaps, too, they were afraid of the discipline that might be imposed on them were they to become regular soldiers.

Most of the Oad clans travel in companies with their women and children. I have myself seen what Sir Arthur Wellesley saw, a train of Oads, armed with spears and swords, with their women seated on carts, carrying bows and arrows. But I do not think that this company belonged to the Brinjara section. Anyway, they refused to answer any questions.

But railways and motor cars are putting an end to Brinjaras as Brinjaras. When they ceased to form parts of armies they became grain carriers, that is to say, they carried grain from one part of India to another, selling it *en route* to shopkeepers and others, and I have heard that they could be a terror in those days to villagers, for they were not above doing a bit of looting on their own. To-day you will never hear of them.

The Oads have, I regret to say, several sections which are considered criminal. I cannot think of them as ordinary thieves. They are a cut above that, or at least their thieving is done in a novel way. Two or three families of Oads, or rather of a subsection of Oads, will march through a country. When they approach a village the men will go through it singing songs and beating on drums. This noise and excitement will bring most of the villagers and their wives and children to the doors of their houses. In the meanwhile the women belonging to the Oads have slipped round behind the houses and are picking up what they can. I have been told that the Oads take particular care to get the village children out of the way, as, naturally, children are the first to run to any place where there is promise of singing and music.

Once I was spending a night with a shikari hidden in some rushes waiting for the morning and the

flights of duck. Dawn had just come but there were no duck. While I was waiting and watching, the shikari pointed to some movement in the reeds, thirty or forty yards away, and uttered the single word: 'Oad.' I remained quite still to see what would happen, and presently the broad and hairy face of an Oad appeared. These men are observant enough, but in this case neither I nor my shikari were seen. The Oad got out of the reeds and proceeded to cross the marsh. After he had gone about fifty yards another Oad appeared and made his way silently in the same direction. In this way, thirty or forty Oads appeared and silently marched away. My shikari told me that this was the habit of this particular section of Oads. Most country people in India walk in single file, but this fifty paces' interval was something new to me. The Oads adopted it probably because they were bent on some mischief or other; by going at long intervals they thought that they were less likely to be noticed.

It is not easy to generalise about the Nats. They claim to form part and parcel of the Hindu fabric, but many orthodox Hindus will not admit that as a fact. In any case the number of clans and sub-sections amongst them are very numerous, and some certainly belong to a much higher scale of civilisation than others. They seem to have no affinity in customs and manners with one another.

You will find Nats living in villages and in towns engaged in all kinds of lowly occupations. Other Nats will be employed as casual labourers in the fields. Some pick up a living fishing and build regular settlements, others really belong to the wilds and get a living as they can from field and forest.

I have referred to the Gidharias, who live upon jackals. And here is something that most people will refuse to believe. The Gidharia need not hunt and trap his jackal. They come to him to be killed. At least, he calls them, and when they approach close enough he loosens his dogs upon them and they are killed. This calling of jackals is done in the following way: a Gidharia, or several Gidharias accompanied by their dogs, will select an open field in some locality haunted by jackals; one man will go into the field carrying the boughs or branches of a tree or a bush. He will conceal himself under this green stuff while the other men with their dogs hide in some ditch or ravine close by. Presently the man under the green bushes will begin to heave and agitate the bushes, at the same time uttering wild yells, of the kind that a pig might make when it is about to be slaughtered. The curiosity of the jackals is aroused when they hear these sounds; it is still further aroused when coming closer to investigate they find the bushes

heaving as if some animal were dying underneath. In due course the jackals will come nearer and nearer, and then the dogs will be loosened upon them.

An expert on Indian gipsies tells me that some Gidharia families are so good at calling jackals that they do not need all this camouflage of hiding under a mass of green stuff. They do no more than call, and further, while they are calling, other members of the group stand about them armed with clubs. The jackals are so interested in the call that they come right into the group and are killed with clubs. When I enquired whether the calls resembled a call made by a jackal, the reply was, 'No, nothing like it.'

There is at least one European in India who has learned to imitate the very call that the Gidharias use, and I am told that he is just as successful as the Gidharias in getting jackals to come to him. I have never heard of any Indians of other castes claiming to be able to summon these tricky animals. Sometimes, when there is a festivity or something of that kind on in a village, a Gidharia will be sent for in order to provide a bit of fun for the villagers, who sit about armed with various weapons and take part in the killing of jackals as they come up one by one.

But it is impossible to-day to talk about jackals and calling them without a reference to the phiaw.

I think it was in the earlier years of the last century that the phiaw was first mentioned by travellers. One of them said he had been out with a hunting party and that a strange animal about the size of a sheep had been driven out of the jungle, and as it went past it uttered a cry which can best be described by the use of the letters which form the word 'phiaw.' The traveller said that his host declared that this animal, which they call phiaw, was a rare and precious beast and it was a pity that it had escaped. But to-day there can be hardly any doubt that the phiaw is a jackal, which when excited utters the cry from which it takes its name. Some observers say that a fox may also utter the same kind of cry. Anyway, whatever may have been the case years ago very many people seem to hear the cry now, and most of them take it as a sign that an excited or alarmed jackal is somewhere in the vicinity.

Several men have written to me to say that they have actually seen the jackal when it has uttered the cry. A tea-planter told the following story. He was in a bungalow, the drawing-room of which was decorated with the heads of some magnificent tigers and panthers which his host had shot. It was dark outside and the lights in the drawing-room were all turned full on. Presently the planter saw a jackal come creeping up to the veranda out of the gloom.

Jackals are full of curiosity. This one ventured from the veranda into the drawing-room and looked around. Then a change was actually seen to come over its face, which became absolutely horror-stricken. It had seen the heads on the walls ! Uttering one tremendous howl it fled back into the gloom.

But besides foxes and jackals there is another animal which has a right to be called a phiaw. I think it was a man in Western India who wrote to me about this phiaw. He was in camp and was kept awake for some time by a phiaw which was uttered not far from him whenever he dropped off to sleep. And, tired of the constant interruption, finally he got up to investigate. The sound was coming from a sort of cave in a rock close to where the camp was pitched. The man crept up to the cave with a shotgun. The closer he came to the cave the louder and more ear-rending became the phiaw. At last he fired into the mouth of the cave; the sound ceased and was heard no more that night. In the morning an investigation of the cave showed a great horned owl lying dead inside. So it appears that the phiaw is not *only* a jackal.

The subject of jackals is very hard to leave. I cannot resist the temptation to say that, amongst the peasantry in India, the jackal is supposed to have a greater contempt for mankind than any other

animal. It shows its contempt by joining a pack which will assemble in the middle of a village and howl all night. These howls are very different from the phiaw; they are really derisive yells, and newcomers to India are often alarmed by them. But ordinarily the jackal is a cowardly animal and there is nothing to be feared from him. According to the villagers these yells are really laughter, and the animals are merely showing how low is their opinion of the villagers in the village they have entered. And certainly if you listen to a jackal chorus you will get the impression that the animals are really taking a pleasure in annoying and disturbing everybody. It is not hard to feel glad there are Gidharias to eat them. The villagers, getting level with the derisive jackals, will point out that there are three words in Hindustani expressing loathing. One is 'gid,' a vulture; a second is 'gidhar,' a jackal; the third is 'gidharia,' a man belonging to the clan mentioned.

Another Nat clan is the Samperia, the snake-eaters. These people are found mostly in the Sundarbans; but they claim to have come from Chota Nagpur. I place them amongst the Nats, for they have all the gipsy characteristics, but an authority whom I would not willingly contradict says that they are an offshoot of the Santhals and belong to the real aboriginal tribes. They make a

double kind of a living out of snakes. The more harmless ones they eat; others they catch and sell. Snake-charmers, who are mostly Oads, come down to the Sundarbans to buy cobras from the Samperias, and many agents belonging to medical schools and learned institutions, which want snakes to study, come to them for specimens.

I have been in a Samperia village which was really crawling with snakes and the babies crawling amongst the snakes. To make the sight more horrifying still, I saw that many of the snakes were cobras. When I enquired whether it was not very dangerous to allow babies to be crawling on the floor where cobras were sunning themselves the reply was that the cobra was the least vicious of the poisonous snakes. Moreover even the babies knew that a cobra, before it could bite, had to get into an erect position. When a cobra was not standing up it was unable to get its fangs into anybody or anything. I do not know whether this is true or not, but certainly judging by the position of the fangs it would be difficult for a cobra to eject its poison when lying flat on the ground. Babies could therefore roll over them with impunity.

An indigo planter who has only recently died was well known for his fondness for cobras. I have a letter from him in which he wrote bitterly about a suggestion I had made in a paper that all cobras

should be killed at sight. Only a very angry cobra, he said, would ever strike anybody. But why make them angry? He had several cobras in his compound and they were accustomed to come into his house and lie about in his rooms; one particularly would curl itself up on his desk like a cat while he wrote. The letter added that people were so silly about his cobras that he found some difficulty in getting his servants to stay with him.

But cobras are not so valuable, and the karait is too bad-tempered to be tolerated in a village; so the snakes that the Samperias concentrate on for other than edible purposes are the hamadryad and the python.

The hamadryad is the king cobra, and is of course the most terrible snake in the East. I do not know what methods they use to capture their snakes, but the Samperias are certainly more clever at it than any other of the tribes living in and upon the forest. A good healthy king cobra will fetch quite a hundred rupees; while pythons are paid for at five rupees a foot.

The trade in these snakes, as in all wild animals, is a very secret one. Agents come and go in a stealthy way. I remember some people who went down into the Sundarbans trying to buy a python from a Samperia encampment. This wretched snake was laced to a palm tree up and down, but the Samperias

refused to sell. They said it was going to a foreign country and that some men would presently come for it. When asked how it was to be carried away they made the motion of pouring something into a box. I heard once that the Alipore zoo had bought a very large python from the Samperias. It came up coiled in a box. When the box was opened a very angry snake indeed popped its head out, but there were some Samperias there to see to the snake, and they hurled themselves upon it; other helpers were summoned and with twenty or thirty men holding on to it, it was pushed into a cage. When there, it sulked for more than a year before it would eat anything.

As I have said, Nats do not go about in great family parties; solitary Nats are to be found everywhere. I have never quite fathomed the truth about these solitary men, but I am inclined to think that they have been expelled from the clan just as a rogue elephant is often expelled from his herd. Either they have broken some caste rules, or they are surly and dangerous men with whom the others would have nothing to do. Sometimes a Nat will follow people out shooting snipe or fishing and offer to help in various ways. A Nat I knew often came out with me after snipe. He was not asked to come and if I paid him nothing he not only did not grumble but did not show disappointment in any

way. On several occasions, walking behind me, he would tap me on the shoulder and point out a snipe actually crouching in the mud or amongst the reeds. I have never known anybody else able to spot a snipe before it rose. Again, if a snipe were missed he could follow its flight, and say where it alighted again. (I am now talking of fat Bengal snipe. I do not think the more wary and leaner Punjabi snipe once flushed, drops again so quickly that it can be spotted.) Sometimes this Nat would bring me a fish; again he did not seem to mind whether he were paid for it or not. The trouble with this man was that there was no getting hold of the dialect which he spoke. I never knew what he said and he never knew what I said.

How do the Nats and the Oads get on with each other? As I have said, Oad snake-charmers buy their snakes very often from Nats, but that is the only case of which I know in which there is an intercourse between the two great tribes. The rest do not get on at all; they dislike each other intensely. The Oads put on airs, and the Nats are slightly afraid of them, just as in the old days they were afraid of them on the edge of the great forest. The other castes permit the Oads to say that they are Hindus, but I have often heard caste men say that the Nats were not real Hindus. On the other hand, I suppose owing to the reign of law introduced by the British

Government, the Nats cannot be forcibly prevented from calling themselves Hindus. And they do so. But they are unable to get any kind of priest to officiate at their ceremonies, and the religion they profess is a great mixture of devil worship and Animism. I have never been present at any of their ceremonies, and I think that such ceremonies are generally held in secret.

It is to be noted that the further East you go, the more does the word Nat become synonymous with devil and evil spirit. In Burma, all Nats are evil spirits, and the Burmese say the forest abounds with them.

Every now and then there is a great gathering of snake-charmers in the Sundarbans to perform some very special ceremony. The Samperias, I have been told, keep watch and ward to see that no strangers approach the locality where the ceremony is held. The spot is not very far from Calcutta. Once I got word of where this ceremony was taking place and a man volunteered to drive me to the scene. He said that no one would dare to prevent a sahib going to the spot. I rather thought at the time that this man was only after taking some money from me, but I think he was genuine, and if we did not see the ceremony it was simply because we were late. What we did see was a long line of snake-charmers coming away from the locality in single file with bent heads

and full baskets. You must know that the snake-charmer can always be told by his yellow robes and his two baskets, carried across the shoulders and slung on a pole, one basket contains the cobras and the other personal things and perhaps some large worms. These worms, I was told, are very scarce, and the Oads pay as much for them as they pay for cobras. The worms do not perform, but they provide a sort of comic relief. The charmer, when he is performing and there is a small crowd round him, will suddenly rush to the second basket, pull out a worm and fling it at somebody in the crowd. If the man happens to be a town-dweller he will certainly mistake the worm for a snake and draw back with a startled cry. And that is not surprising, for I can assure you some of these earthworms are from four to five feet long and very thick and heavy. I wonder whether the snakes are ever given small earthworms to eat. I rather think they are, because I cannot see how the snake-charmer keeps his cobras provided with food.

One could go on enumerating dozens of Nat and Oad clans, but that would become wearisome. I must, however, before I finish with this chapter, mention the birdcatchers. Sometimes a resident in a city may lose his pet parrot. His servants tell him to get hold of a chirriah-wallah. This man comes along with a series of bamboo pipes, one fitting into

another; the top one has a bit of birdlime attached. He will make enquiries as to where the cage is usually hung, and will presently find a tree in which he thinks the bird is seated, and it is curious how often he is right. If he is unsuccessful at that tree, he will make a circuit to other trees, not looking but listening. Cage-birds, when they get loose, are often mobbed by other birds, and it is for the sound of a bird riot that the Nat listens. Having finally spotted the bird, he stands under the tree and with infinite patience moves that bamboo instrument of his up towards the bird. It is hardly believable, but so carefully is the bamboo pushed upward, that the bird is not aware of it. Suddenly there is an upward jab and the bird is caught by the birdlime at the top of the pole. I do not know what this birdlime is composed of, but it is the most adhesive stuff that I have ever struck. The chirriah-wallah will, when he is out catching birds for the cage, come away from a day's outing with quite a dozen birds. Once a pole has touched a bird it cannot get away. Not only the feathers are caught, but the actual skin is held.

When I was told that the birdlime is used in certain parts to catch tigers I was rather amused, but later on when the method was explained to me I saw that it was quite feasible. What is done is this: some open glade which the tiger is accustomed to

cross every day is strewn with leaves of the pipal tree, and every leaf is smeared with birdlime. When the tiger comes along he finds, to begin with, the leaves adhering to his paws; in attempting to get them off he finds that some leaves are now sticking to his head and to his flanks. He will begin to roll and in consequence will in due time be covered with leaves. They get into his eyes. In the meanwhile Nats with bows and arrows are perched on the trees all round. When the tiger is absolutely mad with rage, and blind, the arrows descend on him and he is slain. His skin is taken off him, and his whiskers and heart are eaten, because they are supposed to give an extra bit of courage to those who partake of them.

For myself, I prefer devils on horseback.

GUARDIANS OF THE LAW

From the gipsies there is a natural transition to the police of India, because many of the criminal tribes are clans of the two gipsy races, the Oads and Nats. It happens that in India the police represent to the majority of the inhabitants all the authority of the Government. Very little they know about the high administrators and high officials. The sahibs and important Indian officials they may see, but they do not come in contact with them. The policemen are with them in all their activities, and there can be no doubt that at one time the Indian police in the subordinate rank took a cruel advantage of the authority they possessed. They not only took bribes but they levied blackmail. I have known two or three cases in which a murder or a sudden death in a respectable family was followed by the ruin of everybody who could be shown by the police sub-inspectors to have any connection with the family; but I will not go into a condition of affairs which disappeared some years ago. On the other hand, it would be absurd to say that the police in India

approach anything like the standard to be found in Europe. A large number of police officers will demur; some indeed will be very angry, but these latter, I think, are people so proud of their service that they are absolutely blind to facts. But year by year, a better class of men are being enlisted into the police, and year by year the people are learning to know more about their own rights under the law and are less ready to be terrified or blackmailed. In fact, in some parts the boot is on the other leg. Unless the police are very careful, false charges are likely to be levied against them.

Apart from crimes committed by the criminal tribes, the police have to deal with what is termed 'dacoity,' which is exactly what they used to call in Australia 'robbery under arms.' Dacoits are not ordinary sinners; very often they come from an adjoining village or some village not very far distant from the one which is attacked. Sometimes the attack is a general one upon every house in the village; sometimes one particular house is picked out. There is a sudden rush into a village by men carrying torches and armed with spears and swords; they knock at a door.

Knock, knock.

'Who is there?'

And then comes the terrible reply: 'We are your fathers.' Everybody in the house knows what is

meant by that insulting expression. They had better open quickly or the door will be burst open, and not only everything taken, but the inmates will be probably subjected to torture. As a rule in a village the money that the householders may have saved is hidden in a hole under the hearth. If no money is found there, then I am afraid all kinds of expedients are employed to make the old man tell where his hoard of money is. If he is still obstinate, there are others, particularly the women and children, who might be able to tell. If there is any money the dacoits get hold of it. In the meanwhile the other villagers have collected on the outskirts of the village. Sometimes, when the attacking party is small, these villagers will make a counter-attack; but that is not very often, for it is possible that the dacoits have firearms; they always pretend to have firearms, for they bring with them throw-down bombs which are remarkable for the noise they can make when they are flung violently on the ground. Sometimes even when a counter-attack is possible, none is made. I remember a case where there was a dacoity in a village close to where I had a camp. I went to the village next morning, to see what had happened, and was then told that the richest man in the village had been robbed of everything he had, and had been killed. I said to the villagers that they looked a very stout, a hefty lot;

why had they permitted such an evil deed to take place ?

‘It was not an evil deed,’ said an elderly spokesman.

‘Why not ?’

‘Because Banarsi Lal was a money-lender ; we are all in his debt and when the dacoits killed him they carried off all his papers, which have probably been burnt by this time. So we are no longer indebted to anyone.’

I said : ‘You are foolish to say this to a stranger. Supposing he were a police-wallah. The first thing he would do would be to implicate you in the murder of this unfortunate man.’

The villager grew grey at the mention of the police and said no more.

Dacoities followed by murder frequently take place, I suppose ; but still the average dacoity is a straightforward robbery under arms, committed by rogues from somewhere in the same district. The trouble the police have in tracing the prime movers or even the smaller fry in a dacoity is due to the fact that no reproach attaches in most places to this form of crime. It is supposed to be a dashing thing to take part in a dacoity or two. I remember once when a sepoy in my regiment wanted to take an old muzzle-loader, that was his property and was kept in the armoury, away with him as he was going on

leave ; I said as a joke : 'I suppose you want it because you intend to commit a dacoity.' Instead of being shocked the man agreed, saying that possibly an opportunity for a dacoity would offer and it would be a pity to miss it.

But in addition to these amateur dacoits, who commit dacoity as much for the fun and excitement of the thing as for purposes of gain, there are professional gangs about. These people travel far afield and hardly ever commit a dacoity in their own district. They do not belong to any special caste, though each gang consists of men of the same caste. Nowadays the police have got a system of preventing dacoities by this class of professional dacoit, by merely keeping an eye on gangs of men who arrive together at a railway station and take tickets for any place outside the district. They warn the next district and mention the station at which the gang intends to detrain. They are there warned that the object they have in view is well known and they had better go home again. Of course this system can be got round by the men travelling as individuals and arriving at their destination on different dates, but I think that nowadays the dacoity gangs do not have very long lives.

Very often, one man, after an attack on a house, is captured by the villagers ; from him the police get the names of his friends. Occasionally, a gang which

might have started a hundred strong, is reduced in the course of time to only a dozen or half a dozen. Then it becomes really dangerous. The remaining few, hunted from place to place, finally take refuge in the jungle. From there they issue forth to attack or assault everybody who happens to pass their way. Sometimes they make a mad rush into a village, where they behave with the ferocity of tigers, slashing and slaying. Several of them may possess guns, or rifles, which they use without restraint. Every man in that gang may have from twelve to fifty murders on his head. Ordinary police methods are of no use in dealing with a gang of this kind. I have said they behave with the ferocity of tigers; they have to be treated like tigers. Armed police are kept in readiness like tigers on leash till information arrives as to the whereabouts of the dacoits. Again and again the dacoits elude their pursuers, but the day will come when they will be overtaken. Then a real battle must follow. I suppose there is hardly a police officer in India who has not had experience of such a battle, which must end, as most battles do, in so many slain on each side and victory to the strongest.

Many police officers have become famous as a result of the battles they have fought with dacoits. I may mention such names as Warburton, Beatty, Holland, Pennall, Tegart, Tomkyns and Bradley.

There are many others who have been famous in their own districts. Handyside was both a policeman and a soldier, because he fought sometimes as a soldier when dealing with raiders, and sometimes as a policeman when dealing with dacoits.

I had it in my mind to tell some stories about these famous policemen, but I think I must wait for another occasion. I knew some of the men I mentioned, personally, but perhaps after all I might say a brief word or two about them.

The Warburtons were the sons of an Afghan lady of really good position, and it was said that it was due to this fact that Colonel Warburton came to have such an intimate acquaintance with the Khyber tribes. I knew his brother in the Punjab police, and they used to tell extraordinary stories about the way in which he wandered in and out of the city in disguise. I know he went about in disguise because on one occasion I was in a police station when he came in clad in a burka, that is the garment with a pierced head-piece which Indian women who are kept in seclusion wear when they walk abroad. He flung off the burka and was very annoyed when he saw me. He told me to hold my peace for ever after or there would be trouble. He was a short man, and so could pass himself off in a garment that appears to increase height noticeably.

Warburton finally was given sole political charge

of the Khyber, and as 'Warden of the Marches' he became a very famous man indeed in India. The Khyber is held by two of the most dangerous tribes on the Frontier, the Mohmands on the right side and the Afridis on the left. The Afridis are the more powerful tribe, both because they have larger numbers and because they have more money and therefore more rifles. Many of them are educated in a certain kind of way, that is to say, they have a larger knowledge of the world. They used to enlist readily in the Indian Army, and many of them would even venture abroad; some even used to take service as firemen on ocean-going liners. Their country itself is very poor, and crops are grown with great difficulty, but the Afridis have made their money, as I say, in various ways, and the sole idea of an Afridi when he has obtained a certain amount is to buy himself a rifle and set up as a freebooter and adventurer.

As I explained in another chapter, many Afridis live in caves; so they have no house-rent to pay. The younger men amongst those who do not go abroad as soldiers or in some other capacity do a bit of cultivating. There is always a certain amount of money for the senior men because in one way or another they are paid for guarding the Pass. In the old days Afridis made their money by levying toll upon caravans going to or coming from Afghanistan.

That was stopped by the British Government. When they pleaded that they would be reduced to poverty if they did not levy tribute, the Indian Government paid them money for guarding the Pass.

These Khyber Rifles and khassadars that we read of are employed to guard the Pass; that is the way the Government pays the Afridis to keep the peace: in fact they are paid to protect travellers against other Afridis. It was Warburton's job to see that these reckless and desperate men did keep the peace which they were paid to keep. And very seldom indeed during his time was the Khyber disturbed. Local feuds went on, of course, and murders galore, but there was little raiding. I do not know what Warburton's secret was or how he kept the Afridis in order. The fact that he did it made him famous, for the experience of other officers was that peace could only exist in the Pass for short intervals.

After he had gone, the Afridis began to demand more and more money for keeping the peace. It was given after they had consented to a carriage road being built through the Pass. Later on a second road was built, running not far from the other; so for more money we got more roads leading into Afghanistan. Now there is a railway also, and the Afridis are getting more money for seeing that that is not interfered with. We have, therefore, a whole